



PEER MENTORING

SUPPLEMENT TO THE

ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE PRACTICE FOR MENTORING

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MENTOR

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MENTOR is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States. Our mission is to expand the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships nationwide. Potential is equally distributed; opportunity is not. A major driver of healthy development and opportunity is who you know and who’s in your corner. Thirty years ago, MENTOR was created to expand that opportunity for young people by building a youth mentoring field and movement, serving as the expert and go-to resource on quality mentoring. The result is a more than 10-time increase in young people in structured mentoring relationships, from hundreds of thousands to millions. Today, we activate a movement across sectors that is diverse and broad and seeps into every aspect of daily life. We are connecting and fueling opportunity for young people everywhere they are from schools to workplaces and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

When one thinks of a mentor, we are often drawn to images of a wiser, older (sometimes much older) adult passing on wisdom and skills to a younger protégé—the college professor encouraging a promising undergrad, a master craftsman teaching a lifetime of skills to an apprentice, the “last Jedi” passing on his knowledge of The Force to a new pupil. And while most mentoring relationships involve a hierarchical structure and an imbalance of experience, knowledge, or skill, there is a type of mentoring that approaches these relationships from a slightly different perspective: peer mentoring.

There is a long history of using peer-led interventions to support the healthy development of young people from their early childhood through their adolescent years and into young adulthood and the world of work.¹⁻⁴ These programs — which come in an almost infinite variety of peer coaching, peer leadership, and peer helping — often make use of socioecological approaches that postulate that young people may be motivated to positively change or adapt their behavior and attitudes in relation to the social context around them and that their fellow peers might actually, in some cases, be better suited to influence their future thoughts and actions than adults.

This desire to use youth themselves as the deliverers of services, interventions, and key messages to other youth has certainly spread to the world of mentoring in the last few decades. In addition to building on that youth’s social ecology, these programs are also appealing because they offer the potential for having a dual impact in which mentees benefit from what mentors are offering, while the

youth serving in the mentor role also experience a range of positive outcomes. The use of older peers as mentors often also reduces the need for elaborate and costly volunteer recruitment activities compared to most mentoring efforts, as schools, camps, clubs, and other settings offer a fairly “captive” potential audience of mentors to recruit from.

These peer mentoring programs have grown in scope and stature in the mentoring field over the last few decades. A 2017 report by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership found that about 7 percent of the nation’s mentoring programs (out of a sample of over 1,400 programs) identified as being a cross-age peer model (meaning that mentors were slightly older youth than the mentees). That same report found that about 7 percent of the nation’s mentors were high school age youth, with another 13 percent being college age (although it is possible that many of these college mentors were volunteering in programs that were not technically near peer mentoring programs). Peer mentoring programs also seem to report some of the cost efficiencies noted here as they were the least expensive program model according to that survey, with an estimated average cost per youth of \$1,170 per year.⁵



DEFINING PEER MENTORING

While peer mentoring programs have been popular for many years, they also represent a type of mentoring model that is easily misunderstood. Given that there are many, many varieties of peer-led programming offered in schools and other contexts, there can be some definitional misunderstanding about what constitutes actual peer mentoring.

For the purposes of this review, we defined peer mentoring as *a model of mentoring service delivery in which an older adolescent or child is matched in an explicit mentoring relationship with one or more younger peers*. The age differential noted here is often a critical aspect of the program and how it achieves results, which is why the terms cross-age or near peer are often appended to these descriptions (although it's worth recognizing that we did review literature on models where mentors and mentees were often the same age, for example in Tindall⁶).

The most common models deployed in the field, by far, are those that involve high school or middle school youth mentoring elementary students, undergraduates in higher education mentoring high school students, or college upper classmen mentoring freshmen as they enter higher education institutions. See the literature review section later in this introduction for a more detailed breakdown of the types of mentor-mentee configurations we identified in the literature. But the most prominent programs historically working in this space — such as Big Brothers Big Sisters' High School Bigs program⁷ — are most often those utilizing high school mentors to mentor freshmen, middle schoolers, or older elementary students.

Given that there are a wide variety of similar peer programs, which at first glance can look a lot like peer mentoring, it's worth noting some of the distinguishing factors that differentiate peer mentoring from other peer-led interventions:

- The first thing to note is the **primacy of the mentoring relationship itself** to the achievement of outcomes. While peers may be good at simply teaching skills to other kids, or delivering key messages about topics like healthy behaviors, peer mentoring programs are different because the relationships formed between mentors and younger participants are intentionally built and offer the context in which the benefits of the program are realized. A peer tutor may do a good job of building an academic skill for a mentee, but a peer mentor may go well beyond that simple achievement by using the context of the relationship to help the mentee grow developmentally, in addition to learning skills, and may be a more salient role model because of the proximity in age — older enough to be someone to look up to, but young enough to be relatable and a true friend. Additionally, by focusing on the relationship as the primary point of the program, these programs avoid becoming deficit-based or focused solely on youth “problems.” While these programs certainly achieve laudable results, they do so by forming a relationship that in and of itself has tremendous value to the participants when done well. Readers are encouraged to explore the “Program Design Considerations” chapter for a more detailed explanation of why the relationship needs to be the central component of these programs.





- In most programs, a **minimum of a two-year age gap between mentor and mentee** seems to be a critical aspect of the change mechanisms driven by mentor-mentee interactions. As mentioned previously, there are peer programs in which mentors and youth are roughly the same ages and, in these circumstances, there is often some aspect of the mentors' lived experience that differentiates them from the mentees and affords them that "wiser" mentor role (examples include possessing certain skills or having overcome specific challenges, such as substance abuse). Those "same-age" programs can be quite successful if designed with intentionality, but the vast majority of peer mentoring programs do have some age gap. It's also worth noting that age is a bit of a proxy here for a developmental gap — certainly it is possible for youth of different ages to have similar levels of maturity or other markers of their personal development. Thus, the "two years" recommended here mostly serves as a shorthand way of noting that there should be developmental differences which influence how participants are changed by the mentoring experience. As noted above, this gap allows the mentor to "pull" the mentee up the "developmental ladder"⁸

and facilitate their growth as a person. While this is more often true in programs where the mentees are middle school age or younger, it's worth noting that even programs focused on youth transitioning into college and career also have some aspect of helping the mentee develop as a person, beyond any desired academic or vocational goals. For the mentors, having that age gap allows them to experience feelings of being supportive to the development of another person and fosters development around leadership self-efficacy, independence, empathy and caring, self-esteem and confidence, and positive contribution to an external cause or goal.

- Most programs offer a **minimum of 10 or so mentor-mentee meetings** that allow for relationship initiation, progression, and closure. Although there are peer mentoring programs that take place in shorter timeframes, most peer mentoring programs last several months if not a full school or calendar year (see the "Program Design Considerations" chapter for further discussion about maximizing meetings within the structure of a school calendar). Because the mentoring relationship is central to the work of the program, these relationships inherently need time to get started, build trust and rapport, engage in meaningful activities and reflection, and ultimately to say goodbye and process the gains achieved through this series of interactions. When programs are delivered over just a few meetings, these processes become too fleeting or don't happen at all. And as with all mentoring, there has to be some intentionality of matching so that mentors are meeting with the same youth or group of youth each time. In the absence of that kind of match, these programs simply have youth of various ages doing activities together. That may have value, but it's not mentoring.



The other definitional detail worth noting here, is that we have extended the age range of programs reviewed to inform this publication to include programs where the mentors were undergraduates in college (or equivalent ages) working with high school age youth. We included these programs because they feature a “near-peer” structure, they make use of that developmental age gap to spur growth in the younger participant, and because mentors are still young enough themselves to reap some of the developmental benefits that we see for older adolescents who serve as mentors. We excluded programs where the mentors were in graduate school or equivalent ages as those simply qualify as typical adult-led mentoring programs. Thus, our emphasis here is on programs where both mentor and mentee are young people and there is room for both of them to develop and grow as a result of the experience.

That being said, **the recommendations in this guide will be most helpful to programs working in contexts where both mentors and mentees are youth in the K-12 age range.** While studies on programs focused on the transition to college were helpful in building our understanding of the full scope of peer mentoring, and why slightly older youth make appealing role models and guides for other youth, we ultimately focused on programs working with youth prior to young adulthood. Peer mentoring programs we examined generally fell into two categories: youth development focused and college transition focused. The following table highlights some key similarities and differences.

COMPARING K-12 AND COLLEGE LEVEL PEER MENTORING PROGRAMS

PROGRAM FEATURE	K-12 DEVELOPMENTAL FOCUS	COLLEGE TRANSITION FOCUS
Age of Mentors	Middle or High School	College Upperclassmen
Age of Mentees	Middle or Elementary School	High School Seniors or College Freshmen
Setting	K-12 School or Other Site	College Campus
Match Structure	One-to-one or Group	Primarily One-to-one
Common Focus or Outcome	Social inclusion, school connectedness, leadership development, academic skills, behavior modification, healthy lifestyles, managing peer relationships	Adjustment to campus life, utilization of campus resources, commitment to major/career path, social inclusion, information sharing
Training and Adult Supervision	Extensive: significant work with mentors on developing and implementing activities; high level of supervision	Light training: activities largely up to each match to determine; minimal supervision by program leadership
Use of Curriculum or Activity Guide	Extensive: most interactions are semi- or fully prescribed	Rarely, although some programs offered suggestions/icebreakers
Description of Mentor Role	Role model, credible messenger, friend, teacher of new skills	Information hub, coach, friend, sounding board
Mentor Benefit	Growth as leader, self-confidence, academic credit, prosocial engagement	Friendship, satisfaction of helping another avoid common challenges



While these college-age programs shared many commonalities with their younger-age counterparts — for example, both types require mentors to select and engage in fun and meaningful activities with mentees — the authors ultimately concluded that they operated under some different mechanisms and utilized much looser structures than did programs serving K-12 youth. College transition programs focused almost exclusively on helping mentees adjust to the academic rigors of college and the navigation of campus life and institutions. Mentors were largely focused on transfer of knowledge, not learning or growing together, and their main role was often to pass on tips and lessons learned about how to succeed in college or within a specific course of study. While elements of this do mirror some programs for younger adolescents (for example, programs supporting the transition into ninth grade, such as Peer Group Connection⁹), these programs often looked rather different in terms of their practices and implementation. College transition programs offered lighter training and supervision of mentors, they did not involve the same complexities of scheduling and implementation as did programs set in K-12 schools, and they placed far less emphasis on the benefits gained by the mentor. Programs for younger children demonstrated a wide range of outcomes and goals, whereas college peer programs almost exclusively focused on mentee persistence through freshman year and adherence to a major or field of study.

Because programs serving younger adolescents were more complicated in terms of practices, and relied more on the actions of adults to prepare and supervise participants, we ultimately focused our recommendations on these models. However, programs serving college-age mentees may also find value in these recommendations, especially

those related to the training, preparation, and supervision of mentors. Please see the Literature Search and Review section below for further discussion about the research on both college transition mentoring and the more developmental programming offered to younger participants.

DEVELOPING THIS PUBLICATION

This product represents the sixth topic in MENTOR's series of Supplements to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*[™], and for each of these we have followed a similar development process, as detailed below.

Literature Search and Review

As with all *Elements* publications, this work is grounded in the research literature available on the topic. For this publication, we built on the literature search conducted in 2017 (and through March of 2020) by Drs. Michael Karcher and Josh Berger for their seminal evidence review on cross-age peer mentoring² for the National Mentoring Resource Center, which summarized the available evidence on one-to-one match variants of peer mentoring programs (excluding group and other models). We re-reviewed all of the articles identified for that publication and supplemented that collection with a fresh search of the ProQuest and PsychInfo databases for new articles published since 2017 and older articles on group peer programs. This collection of articles was further supplemented with the inclusion of “gray” literature, such as program manuals, training guides for peer mentors, annual reports from relevant programs, and other implementation content. Our project Working Group members (see below for details) also contributed their internal and external evaluation reports and operational materials to help further our understanding of what these programs tend to look like in action.



General Process for Supplement Development

1. Literature search and review
2. Synthesis of findings/themes
3. Formation of a Working Group of practitioners (and other research experts)
4. Draft initial recommendations within EEPM framework
5. Obtain several rounds of feedback from the Working Group
6. Create “Practice in Action” snapshots from real-life programs
7. Finalize the recommendations and write the justification
8. Obtain feedback on the justifications and final product
9. Disseminate and develop trainings on the Supplement

Description of the Literature Reviewed

At the end of our search process, we had identified well over 500 initial articles and other resources that seemed to be related to peer mentoring. A quick scan of these promptly eliminated several hundred entries that were clearly out of scope: evaluations of adult-to-adult peer mentoring models, mentoring for much older “mentees” in workplaces and the upper echelons of higher education, and programs that did not seem to have a mentoring component in spite of that tag being applied in the database in which we found them.

In the end, we settled on a list of **304 articles, book chapters, reports, and other materials** that we

considered our set for formal review. Of these, 32 of the resources were deemed to be out of scope upon further review, most often because they involved programs in which mentors were primarily adults or did not contain any activities we could identify as being mentoring-focused. For another 23 articles, we were unable to locate a copy of the full content for review and those results are not included below.

The following breakdown will help readers get a sense of the qualities and characteristics of the remaining **249 resources** we examined to inform this publication:

- **Of the articles, 190 were about specific real-life programs**, at least in part. The remaining articles consisted of theoretical papers or literature summaries about peer mentoring, studies of natural mentoring relationships, or general technical assistance guidance documents for practitioners. It’s also worth noting that several program models were represented more than once in the literature (for example, we reviewed eight articles and reports on the Peer Group Connection program model alone). A total of **155 unique programs** were ultimately represented in our review.
- For these unique programs, the breakdown of settings is as follows:
 - **52** programs were set in **higher education** settings
 - **69** programs were set in **K-12 schools**, either during or after school
 - **17** programs were set in other **site-based locations**, such as nonprofits, juvenile detention centers, and places of employment
 - **9** were primarily **online** programs
 - **8** programs primarily had matches meet out in the **community**



• In terms of who served as mentors, the breakdown is as follows (note that some programs used a blend of age ranges in the mentor role):

- **55** programs used **college students** specifically as mentors (almost all of these were programs serving other college students, but eight of them were serving high school or middle school students)
- **22** programs used **other young adults** who were not in college (or it was unclear if they were) as mentors
- **59** programs used **high school students** as mentors
- **12** programs used **middle school students** as mentors
- **10** programs used **elementary students** as mentors (exclusively to other elementary students)

By far, the most common configurations we noted in the literature involved high school juniors and seniors mentoring incoming freshmen at the high school, or college upperclassmen mentoring incoming freshmen in higher education settings.

• **Of the articles, 178 were evaluations of the outcomes of programs or examinations of participants within programs.** These evaluations were essentially evenly split between quantitative studies that measured outcomes for program participants and quantitative studies that analyzed perceptions of participant experiences.

• In terms of the **outcomes** examined in these studies, which reflected the main goals of the programs, we noted the following groupings:

- **118** studies examined **academic outcomes**
- **29** studies examined youth **behavioral improvement**

- **21** studies examined **career-related outcomes**
- **11** studies examined outcomes related to helping youth manage or cope with **physical or intellectual disabilities**
- **3** studies examined outcomes related to **juvenile delinquency and criminality**
- **28** studies examined **health outcomes**
- **16** studies examined outcomes best described as being **focused on positive youth development**
- **74** studies examined outcomes related to **social skills and positive peer interactions**

Looking across all of these studies and program descriptions, some clear patterns emerge. Peer mentoring programs tend to be focused on issues related to academic performance or school transitions or challenges youth are facing managing their behavior or interacting positively with their peers. Not surprisingly, they tend to be housed in schools or other institutional settings that allow for easier meetings and frequent interactions. Many of these programs involved connecting youth to others who shared a common trait, such as an illness, or who had just traveled a path the mentee was about to go down, such as heading into freshman year at a new school. These programs also tend to utilize peers that are relatively close in age. We noted very few programs where the mentees were significantly younger than their mentors.

Beyond these summative descriptions of peer mentoring programs, the next section more thoroughly examines the types of outcomes these programs demonstrated they could achieve and the factors that facilitated or restricted those outcomes. It's worth noting that many of the studies we examined did not produce the expected results, although we did not code the articles for



achievement of outcomes or measures of positive impact, such as effect size. In general, it was a mixed bag of successful programs and ones still trying to demonstrate meaningful impact. But there is plenty of evidence that these programs can achieve a wide variety of outcomes for both mentees and mentors.

Benefits of Peer Mentoring

Benefits for mentees are found in a wide range of developmental, social, and academic outcomes.

The peer mentoring literature is such that it captures a wide range of ages of potential mentees, with this review including programs serving those entering first grade^{10, 11} to programs for mentees in college or late adolescence. And as the age of youth served as mentees increased in the literature, the range of outcomes also grew, and the peer mentoring “programs” became more frequently “components” within larger programs. This is reflected in one trend observed by Dr. Jean Rhodes in her forthcoming book, *Older and Wiser*, in which mentors work alongside clinicians or others helping professionals in an “embedded” supporting role. One study by Black et al (2006)¹² embedded peer mentors in health care services providing postnatal treatment of adolescent mothers to help prevent a second pregnancy, and found the preventive effect most strong for matches with “dosage” approaching our threshold criteria of 10 meetings, suggesting that when peer mentoring is embedded within other programs and given sufficient time for real relationships to form, program outcomes often increase. Yet it is fair to say the diversity of uses of peer mentoring as a core or supplemental service is both a strength and a limitation to our understanding of when it is used most effectively and efficiently.

The wide range of both uses of “peer mentors” and program outcomes may be because peer

support is viewed by researchers and laypeople alike as providing unique leverage for influencing change. The number of studies that used peer mentors to influence health behaviors,^{1, 13} support and foster inclusion among youth with disabilities,^{14, 15, 16, 17} or to prevent high-risk behaviors and crime^{18, 19, 20, 21} reflects a sizeable subgroup of the studies found. It also demonstrates the widely held view of the potential benefits of peer mentoring as a supplemental component or as the key ingredient of effective programs for youth. Several studies have even tested whether behavioral changes (e.g., diet, physical activity) are better coached and encouraged by peers than teachers,²² and examined the relative benefits of electronic (email, text, and video) versus face-to-face peer mentoring.²³ This literature is too small to make definitive recommendations, but it suggests the research is moving in a useful direction that will allow for the more efficient use of peer mentoring as a resource for addressing this wide variety of goals.

Even though this review focuses on developmental approaches to cross-age peer mentoring (drawing a sometimes hard-to-define line between peer mentoring and peer leadership, education, and tutoring), the outcomes addressed by many programs in this review can appear more instrumental or goal-focused than relational and developmental. For example, this review includes several peer mentoring programs that were excluded from prior reviews of cross-age peer mentoring² for omitting information in their reports on the program elements related to mentoring relationship development, which was used as a criteria for determining whether a given peer program found in the literature was truly mentoring or might instead reflect peer education, tutoring, or coaching. More recent work on many of these programs has incorporated relationship



development program components, and yet still many of the articles reviewed in this study continue to lack detailed information on how mentors are trained, as well as how, where, and when time for mentor-mentee-relationship formation occurs in a specific program.

In contrast to these very focused, instructionally based, and outcome-specific uses of peer mentoring in community settings, a majority of the articles we reviewed focused on school engagement and academic success. **Connectedness to school and school engagement or retention** is reported as a benefit of peer mentoring across the developmental spectrum. The majority of peer mentoring programs we reviewed took place in schools, perhaps, as stated earlier, because schools afford ready access to older peers to serve as mentors and so are most easily set up there. But the literature reviews and logical models described in these studies make clear it is because peers are viewed as socialization facilitators and peer influencers. Indeed, most consistently, cross-age peer mentoring has been found to have positive effects on increasing **social support, social acceptance, connectedness** to peers, teachers, and staff, and belonging at all school levels,^{2, 11, 24, 25, 26, 27} and in higher education settings to foster belonging and **persistence** for women, racial/ethnic minority, and first-generation students.^{28, 29, 30, 31, 32}

While the benefits on educational outcomes and academic achievement are certainly present in the literature, they are not reported as consistently as these social connection outcomes, and are more common in higher education peer mentoring studies.^{25, 33-43} Also more common in the higher education setting, a number of programs employ undergraduates to serve as mentors to incoming freshman, sometimes making contact with the mentees before they graduate high school, with

the specific goal of facilitating the **transition to college** and increasing actual **enrollment rates**,^{23, 44} as well as to ensure **retention** from year to year in postsecondary settings.⁴⁵

Benefits for mentors stand out as key programmatic goals and considerations.

Another common focus of research on peer mentoring, which makes it somewhat unique from other literatures in the field of mentoring, is the common focus on, reference to, or concern with outcomes for the mentors. In one multistudy review of outcomes for mentors (both secondary and postsecondary level), the most common outcomes were **shifts in identity**, more **positive views of helping**, generally, and of the kinds of individuals mentored, as well as increased **social support** from the other peer mentors.⁴⁶ Several studies in secondary school settings have also reported improvements in **grades** or broader **academic achievement, connectedness to school**, and **self-esteem**, as well as **social skills** and leadership development.^{11, 25, 35, 47-50} In community workplace settings, disconnected late adolescents serving as peer mentors have reported increased **community engagement** and a **sense of giving back**, which was seen as having benefits for society, schools, and other institutions.⁴³

Benefits for the setting, schools, or institutions are likely to occur but are not well understood.

Less systematic attention has been paid to the benefits to the larger setting following the implementation of a peer mentoring program, such as its effects setting-wide on **peer support, peer culture, or school climate**, though it has been observed^{43,51} — this seems to be because most studies focus on outcomes for participants alone. It is easy to extrapolate from the findings of many reviewed studies, particularly at the postsecondary



level, of benefits to the larger community or institution from increases in participants' retention and persistence toward **completion of planned academic degrees**⁴⁵ but such programs may also influence students' **relationships with teachers and staff**.^{47, 52}

A focused search through abstracts in peer-reviewed journals containing both “peer mentoring” and “school climate” generated eight studies (including three dissertations), suggesting peer mentoring programs may reduce **rates of victimization** and increase attendance by lessening **bullying, cyberbullying, and social exclusion** by students in middle and high schools, perhaps particularly for girls,⁵³ such as has been used schoolwide in England.⁵⁴ (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #1** for an example of how mentors in one program work collaboratively with school counselors to enhance the overall culture and climate of the school.)

The Clear Need for Structural Supports in Peer Mentoring Programs

Not all evaluations we looked at found positive outcomes, but their findings are instructive.

Disappointing findings regarding peer mentoring emerged from one of the most rigorous studies of school-based mentoring, in which peer mentoring was one of two primary approaches. In that study, led by Herrera et al. (2007),⁵⁵ the analysis of the High School Bigs peer mentoring program specifically yielded evidence of just one positive main effect (mentees' social acceptance). Whether the absence of the types of positive effects reported for those mentored by adults is largely a consequence of the great diversity in peer program quality and inconsistency in delivery of the program is hard to know for sure, but analysis of outcomes

linked to specific program practices and to mentor characteristics reveal that for many mentees there were positive outcomes for those whose peer mentors received adequate training and support.^{7, 56}

Benefits of cross-age and near-peer mentoring seem to vary as a function of participant characteristics, and similarly negative or null findings in the literature also seem tied to participant characteristics, such as individuals' motivation to participate and volitional choice. Many of these reveal opportunities for increased support, training, or focused recruitment. For example, in one study of college peer mentoring, the benefits accrued primarily to mentees who started the program with more secure attachments.⁵⁷ Another study of college peer mentoring found that mentors with an avoidant attachment style were less supportive, but that these negative effects could be mitigated by programmatic efforts to boost mentors efficacy, such as through training and support.⁵⁸ In such programs, adaptations in training and support may help extend benefits to those who tend not to benefit. Yet, in some programs, particularly those that are part of required coursework, being put in a mentor or mentee role is not optional, and resentment, disinterest, or other aversion to program participation may dampen overall impact estimates.⁵⁹ Recent research has highlighted that whether participation is mandatory or voluntary can have a major impact on how youth perceive the value of the program and the degree to which they positively engage in the activities offered.²⁵

Peer mentors need more support given that their programs operate differently than programs with adult mentors.

This is discussed further in the next chapter, “Program Design Considerations,” but there are many ways in which running peer mentoring



programs requires a different approach to mentor supervision and monitoring than does the typical adult-with-youth mentoring program, both in schools or community settings. A primary support identified by Herrera et al. (2008)⁷ was the need to prevent inconsistency in mentor's attendance. This was a concern voiced by the majority of the experts on our Working Group, who also noted the importance of preventing experiences of abandonment by mentors among mentees.⁶⁰ In fact, when searching for academic outcomes using the term "attendance" and "peer mentoring" we found most references were to the frequently reported strong correlation between mentor's attendance in the program and their mentees' outcomes. Inconsistency can result from teenage and college-age mentors' motivations fading or changing across the school year, but also in response to unforeseen rival opportunities for extracurricular, employment, or social opportunities later in the year.⁶¹ Program staff (as well as mentors' parents/teachers) can help mentors more realistically assess their motivations and forecast upcoming commitments in initial recruitment and training, but also can address attrition through effective program activities and ongoing training and support.⁶²

Providing ongoing training and focused, relevant, but flexible activities seems critical to effective peer mentoring at all levels. A comparison of peer and adult mentors in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program revealed that perceptions of program quality were related to the amount of training in youth and relationship development they received, as well as the number of hours mentors received.⁶³ Teenage mentors spent more time in casual conversation about personal issues with their mentees than did adults (who focused more on goal-directed activities and conversations). Ironically, however, while engaging in such relational

conversations was positively linked to match quality for teens, it was negatively related to perceptions of program quality. So one element of training that teen mentors seem to need is about the value of such conversations for building strong relationships to bolster mentor efficacy around relationship building.^{52, 64, 65} They also, perhaps, need activities that foster such interactions in relevant or interesting ways, or training in how to effectively seize opportunities for such conversations when doing planned activities with mentees.⁶⁶ Yet too much training also may decrease mentor's motivation to continue mentoring in the future for teens,⁶³ unless the training is part of a larger incentive program, such as being part of a high school class like in the Peer Group Connection program.⁶⁷ These topics around training content and connection to match activities are discussed in more detail in the "Justification" chapter of this resource.

Even postsecondary peer mentoring programs need to ensure ongoing training and monitoring is provided, because while programs in higher education settings seem more explicitly focused on school integration and academic support, peer mentors in college are also sought for social and emotional support. Multiple studies of postsecondary peer mentoring referenced one model⁶⁸ describing the social support functions mentors can provide undergraduates, including for psychological or emotional support, goal-setting and career path decision-making help, academic subject knowledge support, and their presence as a role model. Two studies^{58, 69} suggest peer mentors are consistently turned to for all of these. And given findings described above about the way mentor and mentee characteristics can influence mentoring benefits but program support and training may mitigate the effect of participant characteristics,³⁹ programs in higher education settings would be well



advised to provide ongoing support and training to maximize potential benefits. (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #2** for further discussion about developmental relationships and why mentors of all ages can benefit from being trained in some of these core principles of a developmental approach, regardless of the outcomes the program is aiming for.)

These programs require more planning, coordination, and monitoring than most other models.

What is clear from primary studies like that of Herrera, as well as through conversations with principals, teachers, and leading practitioners like those in our Working Group, is that peer programs require much more structure and support than other types of mentoring, and that administrative buy-in is critical.⁵¹ In our review, peer mentoring programs at all education levels varied greatly in the degree of documentation provided on their program practices, but at all levels there are good examples of programs with manualized training, both in how to establish the mentoring relationship and in how to successfully lead mentoring activities in their matches. At the secondary level, for teens working with primary grade mentees,^{67, 70-77} many programs have well-documented materials to guide consistent implementation, including program manuals with guidance on program setup, delivery, and evaluation, along with a curriculum, mentor training guides, and mentor handbooks. Were future program evaluations and research on peer mentoring to include similarly clear documentation of program practices, goals, and their attention to relationship development components, it could greatly enhance the ability of practitioners and researchers alike to draw more clear conclusions about to what extent peer mentoring delivers, as promised by so many. (**See Practice in Action**

Snapshot #3 for a great example of how one program trains mentors on their activity curriculum and its relationship to program goals.)

Forming a Working Group of Practitioners and Other Researchers

While the literature on peer mentoring was certainly diverse and illuminating, we also wanted to ensure that our recommendations ultimately resonated with the types of practitioners who do work in the peer mentoring space. So, to that end, we formed a Working Group of leading practitioners and researchers who could contribute practice suggestions and review and refine the recommendations we ultimately drafted.

The representatives of this group are detailed below and examples of their work are mentioned throughout this publication and included in the **“Practice in Action Snapshots”** chapter at the end of this guide. These snapshots illustrate what many of the recommendations included here can look like in real-world examples and settings and further highlight effective practices.

This Working Group met a total of five times between February and April 2020. Their main roles were to share what they felt were key successes and challenges experienced by their programs and to review the iterative drafts of the recommendations ultimately included in this resource. Thus, the recommendations for group mentoring here represent a very intentional blending of the best available research evidence and cutting-edge wisdom from the experiences of leading service providers working in the peer mentoring space. The authors thank this Working Group for their incredibly meaningful and insightful contributions to this work.





Josh Berger
Belldegrun Center for Innovative Leadership

The Belldegrun Center for Innovative Leadership (BCIL) prepares community members to engage with real-world challenges and explore solutions within and beyond the classroom. Providing a wide variety of curricular and extracurricular offerings, BCIL connects Brentwood School to the surrounding Los Angeles community, cultivating innovative problem solvers, courageous risk takers, effective managers, adept communicators, and inspired community builders.

One facet of BCIL involves its peer mentoring programs through which older students are trained to mentor younger peers in areas related to leadership, academic, and socioemotional development. Through various peer mentoring structures, consistent outreach meetings take place in one-to-one and group outreach formats, reaching our entire K-12 community.



Carolyn Trager Kliman
City Year

City Year helps students and schools succeed. Diverse teams of City Year AmeriCorps members provide support to students, classrooms, and the whole school, helping to ensure that students in systemically under-resourced schools receive a high-quality education that prepares them with the skills and mindsets to thrive and contribute to their community. A 2015 study shows that schools that partner with City Year were up to two-to-three times more likely to improve on math and English assessments.

A proud member of the AmeriCorps national service network, City Year is supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service, local school districts, and private philanthropy. City Year partners with public schools in 29 communities across the United States and through international affiliates in the United Kingdom and South Africa. Learn more at www.cityyear.org or on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn.



Margo Ross
Center for Supportive Schools

Founded in 1979, the Center for Supportive Schools (CSS) helps schools become places where students want to be. We partner with schools in three areas: developing all students into leaders; empowering teachers to collaborate with each other and with students; and engaging entire school communities to improve how learning happens. CSS's impact can be seen in the experiences of 425,000 students across 500 schools. Peer Group Connection (PGC) is CSS's seminal peer leadership and mentoring program that taps into the power of older students to create nurturing environments for younger students. Results consistently demonstrate that PGC improves students' academic, social, and emotional skills, resulting in significantly lower dropout rates, improved grades, fewer discipline referrals, and avoidance of high-risk behaviors.





Jamie Johnson
Boy With a Ball

Boy With a Ball (BWAB) is an international youth, family and community development organization that betters cities by reaching and equipping young people to turn and transform their communities. Boy With a Ball's Velocity cross-age mentoring program is an evidence-based, high-impact cross-age mentoring program in which high school students in at-risk communities are trained and guided to be mentors to middle school students. Leveraging the power of developmental mentoring relationships, students cultivate connectedness, self-esteem, identity, and academic skills, enabling them to become successful students and influential leaders in their communities. Boy With A Ball partners with and uses a curriculum developed by the University of Texas-San Antonio's Dr. Michael Karcher.

Maryse Richards & Cynthia Onyeka
Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth

The Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth (S.L.I.Y.) project was a cross-age peer mentoring program in which high school youth from severely disadvantaged communities in Chicago had the opportunity to mentor younger peers over the course of one year. This program, funded by the Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and managed by Loyola University Chicago, began in late 2014 and served four communities, three of which were mostly African-American and one of which was mostly Latinx. The overarching goals of this project were to foster positive youth development and reduce negative outcomes related to violence exposure among African-American and Latinx youth from low-income, urban neighborhoods. By providing constructive spaces for peers at different developmental stages to learn from each other on a long-term basis, S.L.I.Y. strived to capitalize on the value of culturally relevant peer influence in order to help lower rates of youth violence and increase prosocial influences.



April Montoya & Leah Galvin
Friends First

FRIENDS FIRST is more than 25 years old and has been dedicated to educating and mentoring teens to make positive life choices and develop healthy relationships. Our vision is to empower teens with the knowledge, skills set, and mentoring needed to lead healthy and successful lives. We are investing in this mission through our in-school STARS peer mentoring program, which is a 26-week program that pairs a younger student with an older student mentor and focuses on the core elements of self-awareness, future focus, and MentorLife®, facilitating Project AIM. It's a positive youth development program that encourages youth to articulate their personal goals and provides parent education workshops and community events. Our students and communities are equipped through our programs with a strong sense of character, competence, confidence, community, and compassion in their pursuit of healthy relationships and rewarding futures.





Carlo Kriekels
YESS Institute

The YESS classroom is a daily, credited class and peer-to-peer mentoring model for underserved middle and high school students. The class provides socioemotional learning and leadership skill development in disenfranchised communities. Student mentors and mentees are recruited for the program and paired based on shared interests and cultural experiences. They work together one-on-one and in small peer groups for an entire academic year on the YESS Institute's socioemotional learning curriculum, Road to Success. YESS also offers postsecondary preparation and family advocate programs. As we support our students on their Road to Success, we envision them becoming caring and productive members of their community.



Donnovan Karber
Christian Association of Youth Mentoring

The Christian Association of Youth Mentoring helps nonprofits and churches start and grow safe, effective, and sustainable mentoring programs. Our vision is to strengthen communities by connecting generations.



Felicia Medellin
College Advising Corps

College Advising Corps wants to help transform individual lives, families, communities, and school systems. We believe that every student deserves the opportunity to enter and complete postsecondary education. We are committed to increasing the number of qualified low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students who benefit from college.



Terri Sullivan
Search Institute

Search Institute is a nonprofit organization that partners with schools, youth programs, community coalitions, and other organizations to conduct and apply research that promotes positive youth development and advances equity.



Laura Batt
Sea Research Foundation

Sea Research Foundation, Inc., (SRF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through conservation, education, and research. SRF operates Mystic Aquarium — one of America's premier nonprofit marine science research and education institutions, and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. STEM Mentoring is SRF's national group mentoring program for youth ages 6-10. The program matches small groups of youth with adult and/or cross-age peer mentors for fun, hands-on activities about STEM, with a particular focus on conservation.



TIPS FOR USING THIS SUPPLEMENT

This Supplement to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* will be most useful to those starting peer mentoring programs, especially those working with K-12 youth, as well as to those who are looking to strengthen their existing services. The recommendations included in the next chapter's section, Recruitment through Closure, offer research- and practice-informed recommendations that should help peer mentoring programs implement effective services beyond just adhering to the generic practices suggested in the original EEPM. We encourage those who are building programs from scratch to also focus on the program design considerations provided at the beginning of the next chapter, as those major themes and considerations were clearly the most prominent factors in program success (or struggle) in both the literature we read and in the opinion of our Working Group of experts.

If you are not familiar with the structure and content of the original *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, we encourage you to review the baseline practices suggested in that resource so that you can better understand the additional recommendations

of this resource. The recommendations for peer mentoring offered here are slotted into the original framework of the EEPM so that practitioners can clearly see where peer models require more attention or different approaches to traditional one-to-one programs. Where possible, we have noted when certain recommendations are more or less applicable to certain peer mentoring programs based on their setting, ages of participants, goals and activities, or other specific features. But in general, the **colored recommendations** will provide critical advice to peer mentoring programs working with K-12 youth.

For those who want to go deeper in their understanding of peer mentoring practices, there is a "Justification and Discussion" chapter that highlights key themes and associated practices for managing a successful peer mentoring program. This section discusses the recommendations in more detail and offers examples from the research and literature reviewed that support the suggested practices. And as noted above, the "Practice in Action Snapshots" provide further examples of real-world application of these practices.



Programs are always encouraged to implement as many of the core Benchmarks and Enhancements of the EEPM as possible. There is always room to improve or strengthen the delivery of any program. But we feel that following the recommendations here will be helpful to any mentoring program that is:

- Using young people in the mentor role
- Thinking about how both mentors and mentees can both grow developmentally as individuals from the experience
- Hoping to use peer-to-peer interactions to achieve specific goals and supplement the messages and encouragement of supportive adults

MENTOR hopes these recommendations help peer mentoring programs improve their services and provide youth with meaningful experiences that help them discover who they are and build a successful future. One of the most compelling

themes from across all of the research reviewed for this project is that these programs can be powerful ways of structuring layers of support for young people. We saw many examples of programs where not only mentees mentored by a near peer, but where that mentor was also mentored by an even older adolescent, who was in turn mentored by a range of adults responsible for the program. This kind of “layered mentoring” approach, in which youth have the opportunity to both give and receive support, can be a powerful way to not only support the participating individuals but to build a culture of caring, support, and positive growth that can influence the environment of an entire school or institution. When young people are supported to lead, as these programs offer, amazing things can happen. MENTOR hopes that peer mentoring models continue to thrive and that this resource can help define and promote their quality programming.



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PROGRAM DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR PEER PROGRAMS TO SUPPLEMENT THE EEPM

The following pages detail the recommendations for peer mentoring programs that emerged from the work of this project. Here we include two types of recommendations:

- **Program Design and Development Considerations** – These represent major themes and considerations for program design and implementation. Programs will need to consider these factors in how they structure and maintain services to maximize their effectiveness and avoid common challenges expressed by experienced practitioners.
- **Recommendations for Practice** – These recommendations provide additional guidance and nuance for peer mentoring programs beyond the standard *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. These recommendations highlight ways in which peer mentoring programs might refine or enhance their day-to-day practices to maximize program success. These brief practice recommendations are described in much more detail in the Justification chapter that follows.

As always, these recommendations should be viewed through the lens of the theory of change of any given program – the activities, goals, and desired outcomes the program has for youth participants and the specific ways in which the actions of mentors and staff lead to those outcomes. Depending on the focus of the program, and the way services are delivered, there still may be other practices that would influence program efficacy. For example, peer programs using a group model may want to also consult the recently completed Supplement on Group Mentoring

Practices to ensure that their understanding of practices relevant to their work is as comprehensive as possible. Thus, the recommendations below should be viewed and implemented through the lens of a program’s specific local circumstances and objectives.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Peer mentoring programs that are currently in the planning and development stages, as well as those looking to revamp existing services, should consider the program design elements noted here. All of these topics were noted research we reviewed and in the conversations with the project’s Working Group about key program features and common challenges.

The relationship needs to be the primary focus.

This may sound obvious, but by definition – and this is an important operational distinction – the key program element that differentiates peer mentoring programs from a host of other peer interventions (e.g., peer counseling, peer helping, peer tutoring, peer leadership, peer coaching, peer support programs) is that the relationship between the mentor and the mentee is considered the primary mechanism of change in the program. In fact, if a peer mentoring program’s logic model does not include something about the development of a close, trusting relationship between the mentor and mentee as a central mediator or mechanism by which the program achieves its intended outcomes, then it is likely not a peer mentoring program in practice. Of course, almost all peer mentoring programs use some kind of planned curriculum or suggested set of activities that are intended to produce specific outcomes in mentees and mentors, such as knowledge about some topic,

skill-building, or reflection. A peer program that only requires these outcomes in order to be considered successful, or that can achieve these outcomes in a variety of ways without the establishment of a mentor-mentee connection of some type, should not be characterized as a mentoring program.

Curiously, while mentoring requires the establishment of a relationship between mentors and mentees, research evidence suggests that the presence of planned activities (ideally ones logically related to the espoused program goals) is essential to bolstering mentors' feelings of self-efficacy or belief in their ability to establish a mentor-mentee bond. Research suggests that peer mentors need structure to hold or frame their meetings with mentee interactions.¹ Furthermore, the absence of planned activities may create a lack of clarity around roles and what they are to do (whether or not the mentors have been effectively trained in the value of relationship development in mentoring) and can leave them feeling frustrated and the match stuck in neutral.

But, and herein lies the rub, the role of peer mentors should not be simply delivering curriculum content or leading prescribed activities. Their job is to form a real relationship, a mutually rewarding friendship, with another student or group of students. When program leaders provide an activity structure, they create the context and vehicle for relationship development. Despite this definitional and conceptual cornerstone of peer mentoring, there were many examples in the literature of programs where there was very little focus on the development of a relationship between mentors and mentees, even though the authors used the term mentoring or mentors in their program descriptions (for example, see Tout, Pancini, & McCormack, 2013²; Castleman & Page, 2015³; or Sharpe, Abrahams,

and Fotou, 2017⁴). Without rapport-building activities, mentors and mentees may not have ample opportunities to learn about each other, find connection points, and grow to value each other and their relationship.⁵ Thus, if practitioners turn peer mentors into tutors or teachers or lecturers, and only provide them a set of curriculum activities without the supplemental support for cultivating, identifying, and discussing the relationships that can develop between match members, they are missing a critically important opportunity. Developing a close, positive mentoring relationship along with interacting in the context of curriculum activities provides the context for achieving the greatest and, potentially, longest lasting impact on mentees.

Some strategies that peer mentoring programs can use to assist their matches in achieving the goal of having a close, positive mentoring relationship include:

- Giving them additional activities to do that are simply about the building of their relationship and nothing else.⁶
- Ensuring they have time dedicated to just getting to know each other and for sharing important events in their lives, not only early on but throughout the program cycle as well.
- Encouraging them to name and reflect on the quality (and positive and negative characteristics) of their relationship.

In peer mentoring, program outcomes are achieved when mentors and mentees like and value each other and feel they have developed something special and different from what each has with others in the program and school or community. Knowing that relationships are an important goal of the program in and of themselves can provide mentors and mentees with a reason to buy into the content



of the program, especially when they perceive the educational or entertainment value of the program activities to be questionable.

Always think about the potential for dual impact in cross-age peer programs.

Because peer mentors are also youth themselves, peer programs, especially cross-age ones, should structure their services to provide mentors with ample opportunities to grow and change. These programs are excellent contexts for building leadership skills^{1, 6} and helping older youth to “come out of their shell” — fostering their confidence through meaningful contribution,⁷ enhancing their self-esteem,^{8, 9, 10} building communication skills,^{11, 12} and supporting their positive identity development,^{13, 14} particularly as it relates to their academic¹⁵ and social identities.¹⁶ A program’s theory of change and logic model should articulate clear and measurable outcomes for peer mentors, explaining how serving in this role can support their development, in addition to that of their mentee.

Youth leadership is an essential change agent.

One of the best ways of helping peer mentors with their personal development is to give them a large role in the conceptualization and management of the program itself. In the literature, we noted several examples of programs that used mentors to help design program activities, give feedback on program activities, and suggest improvements, and even participate in key practices such as leading mentor training or planning group outings and celebration events.^{7, 17-20} Many programs even used a tiered system of participation, where younger students started as mentees, later served as mentors, and then, moved up into “student leader” positions¹ that included leading activities, observing

matches, and essentially, running the program.^{21, 22} This model not only gives youth a developmentally aligned pathway to deepen their involvement in the program over time, but it also frees up adult leaders to focus on big-picture program management tasks and provide meaningful oversight of the program.

Adult leadership and engagement are key to short- and long-term success.

One of the most common challenges faced by peer mentoring programs, particularly those housed in educational settings, was the consistent engagement of adult site leaders or school liaisons. These programs persistently demonstrated a need for program champions — adults in the school system who could secure buy-in from decision-makers and generate access to facilities and resources that would allow the program to thrive.^{1, 23} Ultimately, school or district leaders, such as principals or superintendents, must be engaged with the program, especially in instances that involve the collaboration of two or more campuses in the implementation of the program. When these leaders were not engaged in the program, research suggests the potential for sustainability challenges, such as inadequate funding, limitations on physical space for the program, or reduced access to school resources to support mentor-mentee activities.^{24, 25} (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #4** for an example of how one program managed to tackle the logistics of delivering their model in partner schools.)

The need for strong adult engagement with the program also trickled down to the school counselors and teachers who were often most directly responsible for implementing the program.²⁶ Unfortunately, these programs are often assigned to already busy school staff who are suddenly faced with running the program, often unenthusiastically and with predictably negative results.²⁴ But even



in well-planned programs, program coordinators and school liaisons were instrumental in managing seemingly mundane program operations. For example, if mentors were not also students or participants at the school or site hosting the peer mentoring program, then the school or site liaison played an important role in ensuring that the visiting mentors were welcomed on campus.⁵ Regardless of whether the program was scheduled during the school day, during lunch, or after school, mentees needed to know the procedures, times, and locations of mentoring meetings. In addition, the school or site liaison and the program coordinator needed to make sure that matches had access to adequate space and materials in order to conduct activities.²⁴ So even though these types of programs can be largely youth-led, it is important to remember, as noted in the Introduction of this resource, that adults play an important role in their success, and need to champion the cause and curate the experiences of mentors and mentees.²⁶ (See Practice in Action Snapshot #5 for additional information on the importance of engaged coordinators or program leaders.)

Carefully select peer mentors by avoiding common participation challenges.

Although many peer mentoring programs expect that, as noted above, mentors grow and develop just as much as mentees, we found a general trend in the literature that programs would often recruit “high-achiever” youth to fill the role. After all, these youth are already doing well academically, and may have demonstrated their leadership skills and reliability in other school roles, so one would expect that they might be ideal role models. However, there are several challenges that have emerged when using high-achieving students in the mentor role. Most common are scheduling conflicts, as these students often have a variety of other extracurricular and

academic responsibilities and events that conflict with the meeting times of the program.²⁷ These mentors may also struggle to give their mentees their full attention, because they are focused on their own activities and goals. And academically struggling mentees might have a harder time viewing a high-achieving student as an achievable role model — they may feel that being paired with a student who is excelling only highlights their challenges. And those high-achieving mentors might not be able to understand or empathize with the experiences of a mentee who finds school difficult.

Programs should recruit a diverse pool of mentors, including youth who may be disconnected from school or who could use an opportunity to build a stronger identity.⁹ If program leadership wants to involve high-achieving students, then during recruitment they should stress program requirements and mentor commitment, and help teens anticipate and discuss potential scheduling conflict to ensure that they will be able to participate as needed. And regardless of mentors’ prior academic success, the literature we reviewed suggests that the best peer mentors are those who are “other oriented,” who genuinely care about helping others and forming relationships, and who can participate fully in their roles and responsibilities.²⁵

Be cautious when offering incentives to mentors.

One of the challenges reported in peer mentoring programs was a result providing incentives to mentors. It was quite common in the literature to see models where mentors were participants in a human development or social services class, and were offered course credit or some other incentive or enticement for participating as mentors. While there is nothing inherently wrong with offering peer



mentors incentives for their participation, several mentoring programs reported that participation of mentors dropped off significantly once they received their incentive.²⁷ Specifically, in cases where the mentoring “class” was offered earlier in the school year, participation tended to drop off after mentors had received their course credit or grade for the class. This trend suggests that many peer mentors in these programs were primarily motivated by simply getting the course credit or being able to list this activity on a college application — once they had those things taken care of, their interest in seeing their mentee and being engaged in the program tended to fade. Thus, if peer mentoring programs utilize incentives, they should structure incentives in a way that rewards full participation in the program and prevents mentors from disengaging from the program and their mentees after their personal goals have been met.²⁵

Anticipate challenges of the school setting.

Peer mentoring programs situated in schools consistently reported several operational challenges. Most prominent were **challenges related to the school year and schedule itself**. Participant recruitment and activity planning can eat up a large chunk of the beginning of the school year, and final testing and year-end activities can truncate the end of the program, and in between are a host of holiday breaks, field trips, and various in-service days that can disrupt the meeting schedule for matches.²⁷ All of this means that programs need to plan their activities and goals knowing that they will have limited meeting times throughout the year and that most, if not all, of their matches will be less than one-year relationships. Thus, they should plan a focused number of activities that can be accomplished within a limited school-year calendar, and with enough flexibility that outcomes can still

be achieved, even if participants miss a few sessions here and there. The good news is that we saw examples in the literature of successful programs where matches only met a dozen times or fewer and still reported positive mentee outcomes (for example, Smith & Holloman²⁸ or Clarke-Midura, et al., 2018²⁹). But in general, peer mentoring programs will want to maximize the number of meetings and focus the work that mentors and mentees do in the limited time they will be together.

There were other school-site challenges noted in the literature that highlighted the need for administrative commitment and support in the planning and execution of these programs. Among these challenges were those related to **transporting mentors to the mentees’ school** or site (or other arrangements where one or both participants needed to travel to the meeting site), **challenges finding the right time in the school day for matches to meet**, and **challenges with matches having access to adequate space and resources for meetings**.²⁴ When matches are grouped too closely together, they have trouble engaging in meaningful personal conversations and can be easily distracted by other pairs and their friends. Making sure that peer mentors have all the materials, and physical space, they need to lead activities is a key to success in these programs. Coordination among program and school staff around these logistical issues ensures that mentors and mentees are productive in their relatively limited time together — this includes the procedures for how the school wants to manage having visiting mentors enter, arrive, and depart campus, which can eat into the time matches have together if the process is too cumbersome. Programs that are currently under development should note that the time to secure administrative commitment to the program is before a program starts, and an agreement to



provide these resources should be negotiated with administrators and agreed to in writing. This is also a good time to secure **approval to access data needed for evaluation**, since the program is likely to be collecting outcome data from both mentors and mentees, as well as teachers, parents, and other informants.

Peer mentors need extensive training (and support) to take on what is essentially an adult role.

The role of a mentor is most often associated with adults at the older end of the age spectrum — those who have gained key insights and experience over the years who are now positioned to pass that wisdom on to a new generation. But in cross-age peer mentoring programs, young people themselves volunteer to step into that “wise and older” role, somewhat prematurely. Teens work in what Vygotsky called their “zone of proximal development,” which is that zone of competencies just beyond what an individual can demonstrate independently. Though these competencies — in this case, emotional autonomy, leadership, the ability to lead and guide others — will be performed independently by these peer mentors sometime in the future, at this point in their lives, for them to perform these roles effectively they need considerable scaffolding and external support. This is why a high level of program support — training, monitoring, and match support — is both necessary and sufficient for most teens to be able to serve effectively as “older and wiser” mentors.^{24, 25, 27, 30}

As these competencies do not come naturally to most youth, they will need significant training to be comfortable and competent in this role. The Recommendations that follow later under Standard 3 offer a wealth of advice on both training topics and delivery, especially the importance of clarifying

the mentor role, helping mentors understand how to work with the adults running the program, their role in leading activities with their mentee, and subtle communication skills, including giving positive feedback, active listening, and nonverbal communication. Role-playing and other training activities that allow peer mentors to practice handling specific scenarios may be particularly impactful in training peer mentors.

The overall amount of training may also matter, as the standard two hours suggested in the standard *Elements* is unlikely to be sufficient for the topics and learning activities described above. One of the strongest studies on peer mentoring²⁷ found that “the amount of training received [by high school age mentors] was more consistently associated with match success than it was for adults.” While there may have been other factors that explained part of that finding (e.g., mentors’ internal motivation to participate influencing both training completion and the effort in the match) both teen mentors and the youth they served felt their relationships were stronger and more satisfying as the amount of peer mentor training increased. Thus, programs are encouraged to really take the time needed for preparing these youth for their role from the beginning.

Peer mentors can also benefit from (and need) increased levels of programmatic support and adult supervision compared to that required, on average, for adult mentors. These additional program practices may be fairly easy for most peer mentoring programs to provide — assuming that they have adequate staffing — since the majority of the cross-age peer mentoring programs are site- or school-based programs. Additional structure and oversight are easier when staff are co-located with match meetings, which makes it easier to observe

matches in action, compared to community-based programs. Research suggests that one of the stronger practices for successful peer mentoring is real-time supervision of matches, in which program staff can step in to assist any matches or groups that are struggling with an activity, that are not focusing on the planned activity, or that are having behavioral or relationship challenges. Because peer mentors may not know how to handle a variety of scenarios or challenges, or may make mistakes in how they interact with their mentees, it is important that at least one staff member is free to keep an eye on matches and offer support and corrective instruction as needed.²⁴ A best practice reported in the literature was to have the monitoring and support role be the primary duty of at least one adult staff member, and specifically, to have this role filled by someone who is not the adult responsible for leading group activities or managing general program operations.²⁵

Consider focusing the program on key transition points or on topics where a peer’s influence may be more powerful than that of adults.

We noted many examples in the literature of programs working at key transition points in kids’ lives: the transition into middle school, high school,^{23, 31-34} or college,³⁵⁻⁴⁰ aging out of foster care,⁴¹ entering the world of work,⁴² recently

emigrating to a new country,⁴³ and youth dealing with illnesses,⁴⁴ disabilities,⁴⁵ or health concerns.^{46, 47} Peer mentors may be particularly helpful in sharing their experiences and key advice for navigating these transitions and easing anxiety about new experiences. Peer mentors seem especially well-suited to helping mentees develop greater competency in their social and emotional skills, as well as build their confidence. The combination of one-to-one peer mentoring with group social activities may be a particularly potent combination for helping mentees learn and practice social skills in an accepting environment that can improve their sense of belonging and social competence.

We also noted examples of programs, such as those promoting healthier behaviors and attitudes, which found the influence of a peer, especially a slightly older one, to be more impactful than adult voices of support.²⁸ It may be that mentees may be especially influenced by a respected near peer who serves as a more immediate role model than a much older mentor might. But in general, peer programs seem well-suited to helping youth overcome big hurdles or transition points.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Note: The structure presented below uses the original language from the *Elements of Effective Practice* (4th Edition) as the framework for making additional peer mentoring recommendations. Readers should be aware that some of that language may need to be modified to reference a peer model rather than the implied one-to-one model. Peer mentoring programs can find their specific recommendations in the colored, numbered Recommendations throughout the framework below.

STANDARD 1 – RECRUITMENT

BENCHMARKS:

Mentor Recruitment

B.1.1 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring in the program.

Recommendation 1: Program includes recruitment messages to prospective peer mentors about the fact that they will be mentoring a mentee who is a child or adolescent.

Recommendation 2: Program includes recruitment messages to prospective peer mentors about the importance of considering competing demands on their time, if they volunteer to participate in the program.

Recommendation 3: Program clarifies in recruitment messages the roles and responsibilities of a peer mentor.

B.1.2 Program utilizes recruitment strategies that build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring.

B.1.3 Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.

Recommendation 4: Program prioritizes the recruitment of individuals who:

- a. Can benefit from being a mentor in the program.
- b. Have positive attitudes toward youth.
- c. Are comfortable in initiating conversations with peers.

d. Have a history or interest in society, community, and helping others (they may have formal volunteering or babysitting experience).

e. Are at least two years older than the target age of the mentees.

f. Have previous experience as a mentee, ideally within the program, especially if the program is using a curriculum and new mentors would have confidence in how to do the activities.

B.1.4 Program encourages mentors to assist with recruitment efforts by providing them with resources to ask individuals they know, who meet the eligibility criteria of the program, to be a mentor.

Recommendation 5: Program asks currently enrolled peer mentors or gathers testimonials from former peer mentors to assist in school- or site-based recruitment strategies.

B.1.5 Program trains and encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate mentors for themselves, when relevant.

Recommendation 6: Program encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate peer mentors for themselves from within their school or from older siblings or neighbors.

Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

B.1.6* Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.

Recommendation 7: Program communicates to parents or caregivers that their child will participate in a peer mentoring relationship with a near-aged peer as their mentor.



Recommendation 8: Program communicates to parents or caregivers how peer mentors are screened, matched, trained, monitored, and supported, including highlighting the safety practices employed by the program.

Recommendation 9: Program describes how mentees are expected to participate in the program with a positive and respectful attitude, because they may be close in age to their mentor, so that mentees and families can set realistic expectations and assess their fit with the program.

B.1.7 Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program.

Recommendation 10: Program recruits mentees who are diverse in their behaviors, abilities, interests, and backgrounds.

School or Site Recruitment

New B.1.8: Mentoring program provides recruitment information to the host school (or site) about the eligibility criteria for accepting mentors and mentees in the program, as well as the time, effort, space, resources, staffing, and supports needed to successfully host or execute the peer mentoring program.

ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Recruitment

E.1.1* Program communicates to mentors about how mentoring and volunteering can benefit them.

Recommendation 11: Program utilizes messages related to personal growth, accomplishments, and résumé building opportunities for peer mentors.

E.1.2 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.

E.1.3* Program uses multiple strategies to recruit mentors (e.g., direct ask, social media, traditional methods of mass communication, presentations, referrals) on an ongoing basis.

Recommendation 12: Program considers giving course credit to peer mentors, especially if doing so helps provide more opportunities for training and support, and sustains their involvement in the program to fulfill their initial commitment.

Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

E.1.4 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentees in its program.

E.1.5 Program encourages mentees to recruit other peers to be mentees whose needs match the services offered by the program, when relevant.

STANDARD 2 – SCREENING

BENCHMARKS

Mentor Screening

B.2.1* Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.

Recommendation 13: Program screens prospective peer mentors for:

- a. Potentially benefiting from being a mentor in the program.
- b. Having positive attitudes toward youth.
- c. Being comfortable in initiating conversations with peers.

-
- d. Having a history or interest in society, community, and helping others (they may have formal volunteering or babysitting experience).
 - e. Being ideally at least two years older than the target age of the mentees (or having life experiences that differentiate them from mentees in ways relevant to the program model).
 - f. Likely schedule conflicts or transportation challenges.

B.2.2 Prospective mentors complete a written application that includes questions designed to help assess their safety and suitability for mentoring a youth.

B.2.3 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

Recommendation 14: Program interviews prospective peer mentors about:

- a. Their experience, comfort, and confidence with managing the challenges that can emerge when supervising younger peers who may appear to be disinterested, be uncooperative, or misbehave at times, with training and support.
- b. Their openness to asking for help.
- c. Their motivation for volunteering to be a mentor in this program, in particular.
- d. Their hopes about the program.
- e. How they would handle possible challenges they may face with their mentee.

- f. How they would minimize their time socializing with same-aged peer mentors who are also serving as mentors in the program.
- g. Their questions and concerns they may have about the program.

B.2.4 Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on prospective adult mentors, including searching a national criminal records database, along with sex offender and child abuse registries and, when relevant, driving records.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.2.5 Program conducts reference check interviews with multiple adults who know an applicant (ideally, both personal and professional references) that include questions to help assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

Recommendation 15: Program interviews or requests letters of reference from peers, parents, teachers, or other adults who know the prospective peer mentor well.

B.2.6 Prospective mentors agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or a minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

B.2.7 Prospective mentors agree in writing to participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentees that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by their mentoring program.



Mentee Screening

B.2.8 Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.

Recommendation 16: Program assesses whether or not prospective mentees would benefit from having a mentor who is a peer, and would be able to fully participate in a peer mentoring program.

Recommendation 17: Program recruits mentees who are diverse in their behaviors, abilities, interests, and backgrounds.

B.2.9 Parent(s)/guardian(s) complete an application or referral form.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring program, depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.2.10 Parent(s)/guardian(s) provide informed permission for their child to participate.

B.2.11 Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or the minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

Recommendation 18: Program assesses during the screening process whether prospective mentees may have scheduling challenges or conflicts currently or in the future that would hinder their full attendance at mentoring meetings, and screen out those who may not consistently meet with their mentor or may terminate their relationship prematurely.

B.2.12 Parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing that mentees participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by the mentoring program.

ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Screening

E.2.1 Program utilizes national, fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.2.2 Program conducts at least one home visit of each prospective mentor, especially when the match may be meeting in the mentor's home.

Recommendation 19: Program observes (or requests observations from other adults who know the prospective mentors well) prospective peer mentors in the school environment or after-school program setting to directly view the quality of their relationships with peers and school staff members.

E.2.3 Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults living in the home of prospective mentors, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries, when the match may meet in mentors' homes.

Recommendation 20: Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults present during mentoring program meetings, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries.



E.2.4 School-based programs assess mentors' interest in maintaining contact with their mentees during the summer months (following the close of the academic school year) and offer assistance to matches in maintaining contact.

E.2.5* Programs that utilize adult mentors prioritize accepting mentor applicants who are older than college age.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.2.6* Program uses evidence-based screening tools and practices to identify individuals who have attitudes and beliefs that support safe and effective mentoring relationships.

Recommendation 21: Program screens mentors using evidence-based measures to assess their attitudes toward youth, interest in helping others, and commitment to their mentoring program.

Mentee Screening

E.2.7* Mentees complete an application (either written or verbally).

E.2.8* Mentees provide written assent agreeing to participate in their mentoring program.

STANDARD 3 – TRAINING

BENCHMARKS

Mentor Training

B.3.1 Program provides a minimum of two hours of pre-match, in-person, mentor training.

Recommendation 22: Program provides more than two hours of pre-match mentor training, because of the increased training demands on preparing effective peer mentors, who are, by definition, youth or young adults, and who need to learn additional information about being a mentor to a peer.

B.3.2 Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics:

- a. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, and match termination).

Recommendation 23: Program trains peer mentors on site-specific attendance, arrival, and departure protocols.

Recommendation 24: Program trains peer mentors on providing feedback both on program activities and their relationship with their mentee.

- b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentee, parent or guardian, and the mentoring relationship.

Recommendation 25: Program trains mentors on realistic expectations related to mentoring a close-aged younger peer, including discussing their hopes and concerns with them, given the fact that many teenagers haven't had experience being responsible for the safety or well-being of younger peers.

- c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles.



Recommendation 26: Program provides peer mentors with additional training about roles and boundaries, specifically about not being a peer friend to their mentees. Training topics should include out-of-program contacts; romantic relationships between mentors and mentees; inappropriate conversation topics with their mentee or in the presence of mentees; and being a role model at all times in the building, because mentees are always watching mentors.

Recommendation 27: Program trains peer mentors on how to deliver program activities with fidelity and enthusiasm, especially in programs where mentors are expected to utilize a curriculum or help build specific skills in mentees, including how to facilitate participant interactions and ensure a positive group experience when leading activities and conversations.

Recommendation 28: Program trains peer mentors on how to focus on their mentee and minimize their time socializing with same-aged peers who are also serving as mentors in the program.

d. Relationship development and maintenance.

Recommendation 29: Program trains peer mentors on how to manage the challenges that can emerge when supervising younger peers who may appear to be disinterested, be uncooperative, or misbehave at times.

Recommendation 30: Program trains peer mentors about the importance of acknowledging that it can be difficult to maintain attention on their mentee when they feel drawn to interacting with their same-age peers in the program, especially during challenging times when their mentees most need consistent attention, presence, and availability from the mentor.

Recommendation 31: Program provides peer mentors with additional training about both the value of prioritizing and strategies for developing an effective mentoring relationship (e.g., active listening and reflection), especially when the mentoring program includes structured, planned activities.

Recommendation 32: Program trains peer mentors on:

- a. The importance of preparing and doing activities with their mentees.
- b. The relationship between specific activities and program goals.
- c. Instructions on how to facilitate positive experiences and conduct activities with their mentees (either individually or in groups).
- d. How to build their relationships while doing activities together.
- e. Ethical and safety issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship.

Recommendation 33: Program clarifies policies and procedures with peer mentors regarding how to handle conflicts, disclosures, and disciplinary issues with mentees, including who, when, and how to contact staff members.

- f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.
- g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.
- h. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of youth (e.g., children with an incarcerated parent, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.



Recommendation 34: Program trains mentor to understand the challenges that their mentee may be facing, including potentially having a history of exposure to trauma.

- i. Initiating the mentoring relationship.
- j. Developing an effective, positive relationship with mentee’s family, if relevant.

B.3.3* Program provides pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

- a. Appropriate physical contact
- b. Contact with mentoring program (e.g., who to contact, when to contact)
- c. Relationship monitoring requirements (e.g., response time, frequency, schedule)
- d. Approved activities
- e. Mandatory reporting requirements associated with suspected child abuse or neglect, and suicidality and homicidality

Recommendation 35: Program trains peer mentors on their policies and procedures related to talking to program staff about issues related to the personal health and safety of their mentee (e.g., suspected child abuse or neglect; suicidality and homicidality; being the victim of bullying; bullying peers; mentee’s substance use).

- f. Confidentiality and anonymity

Recommendation 36: Program trains peer mentors regarding the increased complexities associated with maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs, especially if the mentor and mentee attend the same school or have shared friends.

- g. Digital and social media use
- h. Overnight visits and out of town travel
- i. Money spent on mentee and mentoring activities
- j. Transportation
- k. Emergency and crisis situation procedures
- l. Health and medical care
- m. Discipline
- n. Substance use
- o. Firearms and weapons
- p. Inclusion of others in match meetings (e.g., siblings, mentee’s friends)
- q. Photo and image use
- r. Evaluation and use of data
- s. Grievance procedures
- t. Other program relevant topics

B.3.4 Program uses training practices and materials that are informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated.

ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Training

E.3.1 Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more.

Recommendation 37: Program requires more than two hours of pre-match training to peer mentors related to curriculum implementation, if mentors are expected to utilize a curriculum or help build specific skills in mentees.



E.3.2 Program addresses the following post-match training* topics:

- a. How developmental functioning may affect the mentoring relationship
- b. How culture, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and other demographic characteristics of the mentor and mentee may affect the mentoring relationship
- c. Topics tailored to the needs and characteristics of the mentee
- d. Closure procedures

E.3.3 Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability to be a mentor and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

Mentee Training

E.3.4* Program provides training for the mentee on the following topics:

- a. Purpose of mentoring
- b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)

Recommendation 38: Program clarifies policies and procedures with mentees regarding how to handle conflicts and other disciplinary issues between their child and his or her peer mentor, including who, when, and how to contact staff members.

- c. Mentees' goals for mentoring
- d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles

Recommendation 39: Program trains mentees about how to participate in the program, including having a positive and respectful attitude and how to provide feedback to their mentor about what they like and dislike about the program, the mentor, and their interactions to help the mentee learn to be a self-advocate.

- f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
- g. Initiating the mentoring relationship
- h. Procedures for effective closure of the mentoring relationship

E.3.5* Program provides training for the mentee on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

Recommendation 40: Program trains mentees regarding the increased complexity of maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs, especially if the mentor and mentee attend the same school or have shared friends.

Parent or Guardian Training

E.3.6* Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics:

- a. Purpose of mentoring
- b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)



Recommendation 41: Program clarifies policies and procedures with parents or guardians regarding how to handle conflicts and other disciplinary issues between their child and his or her peer mentor, including who, when, and how to contact staff members.

- c. Parents' and mentees' goals for mentoring
- d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles

Recommendation 42: Program trains parents about how their child is expected to participate in the program — including having a positive and respectful attitude — and asks parents to communicate with their child to provide feedback to their mentor about what he or she likes and dislikes about the program, the mentor, and their interactions to help the child learn to be an advocate for her or himself.

- f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
- g. Initiating the mentoring relationship
- h. Developing an effective, working relationship with your child's mentor
- i. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship

E.3.7* Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

Recommendation 43: Program trains parents or guardians regarding the increased complexity of maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs, especially if the mentor and mentee attend the same school or have shared friends.

STANDARD 4 – MATCHING

BENCHMARKS

B.4.1 Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

Recommendation 44: Program considers the prior relationship and behavioral history of peer mentors and mentees (e.g., bullies or victims of bullying, enemies, romantically involved, family friends, have engaged in aggressive or risky behaviors) when making match decisions.

Recommendation 45: Program does not schedule multiple mentors or mentees who engage in risky health or aggressive behaviors to meet in the same room at the same time.

Recommendation 46: Program matches mentors and mentees based upon extracurricular or vocational interests.

B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.

B.4.3 Program staff member should be on site and/or present during the initial match meeting of the mentor and mentee, and, when relevant, parent or guardian.

B.4.4* Mentor, mentee, a program staff member, and, when relevant, the mentee's parent or guardian, meet in person to sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements (e.g., frequency, intensity, and duration of match meetings; roles of each person involved in the mentoring relationship; frequency of contact with program), and risk management policies.



ENHANCEMENTS

E.4.1 Programs match mentee with a mentor who is at least three years older than the mentee.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors. This enhancement is superseded by Recommendations 4.e. and 13.e.

E.4.2 Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another, and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

Recommendation 47: Program uses a meet-and-greet group matching event where mentees and prospective peer mentors can meet and interact with one another, and can provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

E.4.3 Program provides an opportunity for the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide feedback about the mentor selected by the program, prior to the initiation meeting.

E.4.4 Initial match meeting occurs at the home of the mentee with the program staff member present, if the mentor will be picking up the mentee at the mentee's home for match meetings.

E.4.5 Program staff member prepares mentor for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentor with background information about prospective mentee; remind mentor of confidentiality; discuss potential opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring proposed mentee).

E.4.6 Program staff member prepares mentee and his or her parents or guardians for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentee and parent(s) with background information about selected mentor; discuss any

family rules that should be shared with the mentor; discuss what information family members would like to share with the mentor and when).

Recommendation 48: Program communicates in private to mentors and mentees who they will be matched with prior to the first meeting.

STANDARD 5 - MONITORING AND SUPPORT

BENCHMARKS

B.5.1 Program contacts mentors and mentees at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

Recommendation 49: Site-based program staff members should consistently observe each mentor-mentee pair periodically, as needed, throughout the program.

B.5.2 At each mentor monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentors about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure.

Recommendation 50: Program solicits input and/or regular feedback from peer mentors about program activities for matches to do together.

B.5.3 At each mentee monitoring contact, program should ask mentees about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.



B.5.4 Program follows evidence-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from mentors and mentees about the quality of their mentoring relationships, and uses scientifically tested relationship assessment tools.

B.5.5 Program contacts a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian, or teacher) at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.5.6 At each monitoring contact with a responsible adult in the mentee's life, program asks about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

May not be relevant for cross-age peer mentoring programs, depending upon their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.5.7 Program regularly assesses all matches to determine if they should be closed or encouraged to continue.

B.5.8 Program documents information about each mentor-mentee meeting including, at a minimum, the date, length, and description of activity completed.

Recommendation 51: Peer mentors record the activities that they did with their mentees, especially if the activities differ from a preset curriculum, as well as how their activities relate to the goals of the program or their mentee's individual goals for themselves.

B.5.9 Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

Recommendation 52: Program staff members at site-based programs should give peer mentors real-time feedback on their relationships, and offer help and support to peer mentors who are struggling with completing an activity with their mentee or relationship challenges.

Recommendation 53: Site-based programs should have at least two staff members on site when multiple matches are meeting, including one staff member who coordinates activities, and another staff member who is dedicated to actively monitoring and supporting matches in real-time.

B.5.10* Program provides mentees and parents or guardians with access or referrals to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, available social service referrals) to help families address needs and challenges as they arise.

B.5.11 Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.

Recommendation 54: Program provides post-match training with peer mentors regarding ongoing challenges related to collaborative decision-making, boundary issues, and other issues that may be unique to mentoring relationships between close-aged peers.

B.5.12 Program provides mentors with feedback on a regular basis regarding their mentees' outcomes and the impact of mentoring on their mentees to continuously improve mentee outcomes and encourage mentor retention.

ENHANCEMENTS

E.5.1 Program conducts a minimum of one in-person monitoring and support meeting per year with mentor, mentee, and when relevant, parent or guardian.

E.5.2 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and/or offers information about activities that matches might wish to participate in together.

E.5.3* Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and mentees' families.

E.5.4 Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the mentoring relationship, prior to match closure.

Recommendation 55: Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at multiple points during the course of the program, given that youth volunteer mentors need to be incentivized and recognized more frequently than at the conclusion of the program.

E.5.5* At least once each school or calendar year of the mentoring relationship, program thanks the family or a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., guardian or teacher) and recognizes their contributions in supporting the mentee's engagement in mentoring.

STANDARD 6 – CLOSURE

BENCHMARKS

B.6.1 Program has a procedure to manage anticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

B.6.2 Program has a procedure to manage unanticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

B.6.3* Program has a procedure to manage closure when one member of the match is unable or unwilling to engage in the closure process.

B.6.4 Program conducts exit interview with mentors and mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians.

B.6.5* Program has a written policy and procedure, when relevant, for managing rematching.

B.6.6* Program documents that closure procedures were followed.

B.6.7* Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentors' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for mentor notifying the mentee and his or her parents, if relevant, far enough in advance of the anticipated closure meeting to provide sufficient time to adequately prepare the mentee for closure



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- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
 - f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant

Recommendation 56: Program acknowledges with mentors and mentees that they may interact with one another naturally in their school or community, given their probable residential proximity or attendance in the same school system, and reviews the program’s confidentiality policies.

- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant

B.6.8* Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentees’ feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for notification of mentor, if relevant, about the timing of closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant

B.6.9 Program has a written public statement to parents or guardians, if relevant, as well as to mentors and mentees that outline the terms of match closure and the policies for mentor/mentee contact after a match ends (e.g., including contacts using digital or social media).

ENHANCEMENTS

E.6.1 At the conclusion of the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship, program explores the opportunity with mentors, mentees, and (when relevant) parents or guardians to continue the match for an additional period of time.

E.6.2 Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees, when relevant, to mark progress and transition or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship.

Recommendation 57: Program always hosts a final celebration meeting or event for matches, when possible, to publicly honor and recognize the hard work that youth did in the program, and reiterate key messages and lessons learned from the program.

E.6.3* Program staff provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.



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JUSTIFICATION AND DISCUSSION OF THE PEER MENTORING RECOMMENDATIONS

RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS

Recruitment of Program Sites for a Committed, Prepared, and Engaged Setting

One new benchmark (**B.1.8**) was introduced in this Supplement that focuses on the “recruitment” of the appropriate setting or location for hosting the mentoring program. This recommendation rose to the level of a benchmark, because many peer mentoring programs are site- or school-based, rather than community-based, requiring buy-in from the site leadership and staff to be successful. In fact, it was clear from our review of the literature that in order for a mentoring program to provide the type of scaffolding, support, and structure needed to successfully utilize youth as mentors, the host school or site needed to be **fully engaged and committed** to the program.^{1, 2, 3}

In addition, we identified a number of conditions and resources that a site would need to have in order to commit to the program, and in cases where the program is being offered by an external provider, the program would need to have strategies and materials in place to recruit a host site or school. For example, given the commitment and resources needed to be a host site or school, the host needs to have some confidence that the program will run smoothly and that it will positively impact the school climate and/or youth involved as mentors and mentees. Having an **external group with expertise in the youth mentoring field** actually run the program in a school or site could be advantageous, because of the structure, practices, experience, and knowledge of mentoring they bring to the local program.³ This type of expertise and credibility can contribute positively to a site

committed to implementing a program. One of the main selling points described in the literature is that these programs benefit the entire school or site in terms of culture and climate, because this type of program “prioritizes relationships, builds a sense of community, and promotes students being happy and safe.”³

Some common commitment expectations include having an official at the site/school sign a **formal agreement** with the mentoring program (if the school is not itself the program) indicating their willingness to accept and be faithful to the model, design, and core features of the program.⁴ Having a formal agreement and a **program manual** provides a means for both the host site and the mentoring program to clearly identify and record the conditions (e.g., time, effort, space, resources, staffing, supports) needed to run the program. For example, the *Program Manual for the Cross-Age Mentoring Program for Children with Adolescent Mentors (CAMP)* provide sites or schools with a list of resources they would need to have to run an effective program, such as a dedicated program coordinator, space for conducting mentoring activities, reliable transportation, modest funds for supplies and field trips, and, most important, a commitment to the program from the heads of the school or institution.⁵

One common condition of success mentioned by practitioners was having a **local program coordinator** on site. In fact, in a national survey of peer mentoring practitioners, the most important factor associated with having a successful program was having an effective program coordinator (conversely, having an unsuccessful program coordinator was reported to be the biggest challenge).¹ The program coordinator at each site can serve as a liaison to the mentoring program and administer the program.⁴ Managing a mentoring program is both a time-consuming job and serious responsibility, with many potential benefits,



but also some negative ramifications for participants, if it is done haphazardly or poorly.⁴ If the program coordinator is volunteering in this position, not well-trained or supported, or not compensated for their time, they could develop a negative attitude toward the program and the demands it places on them — this theme clearly stood out in the Berger survey of practitioners noted above. Well-supported, trained, and supervised local program coordinators are often the linchpin in achieving long-term and sustained program success.

RECRUITING AND SELECTING THE RIGHT MENTORS FOR THE PROGRAM

Because the mentors in peer programs are youth themselves, more care and attention need to be placed on how the proper individuals are brought into that role. Ultimately, we settled on 13 recommendations related to optimal recruitment and screening practices for locating and enrolling peer mentors.

Addressing the uniqueness of the mentoring role and of developing a friendship with a near-aged mentee

Recruitment messages need to explain to mentors — who may be relatively unfamiliar with the concept of mentoring — exactly what it is, who they will be mentoring, their roles and responsibilities, and the program requirements. These guidelines are similar to those for any mentoring program; however, in addition, peer mentors need to clearly understand that they will be developing a close, helping relationship with a near-aged peer (**B.1.1 Recommendations 1 and 3**). Although being a friend to a mentee is core to the definition of mentoring, recruitment messages need to communicate that the friendship with the mentee is in the service of helping and supporting the mentee. Children and teens may find this type of relationship and role to be unfamiliar because they

developmentally lack the deeper reciprocity and mutuality typically found in this particular type of helping-focused friendship. Right from the beginning, prospective mentors need to be introduced to the idea that they will be involved in a supportive role and helping-focused relationship with a mentee.

Recruiting and enrolling committed mentors is one of the cornerstones of success

One consistent theme in descriptions of mentoring programs is that young volunteers may not be considering the competing demands on their time when they apply to be a mentor and programs need strategies for recruiting, screening, and enrolling peer mentors who will follow through on their commitment to the program. This situation frequently arises in the peer mentoring world because in the beginning of the school year or semester, students' calendars look pretty empty and they may think that they have ample time to devote to a new volunteer program, such as peer mentoring. However, as the school year or semester unfolds, students will likely have increasing amounts of homework, be faced with many enticing extracurricular activities, and a growing list of opportunities to socialize with new and old friends. These competing demands can result in inconsistent attendance and even quitting the mentoring program before it ends. This problem was observed in one study, where several mentors barely made it beyond the beginning stages of the program, quitting after only two months because of extracurricular conflicts.⁶ Conflicts with extracurricular schedules was also one of the main barriers to peer matches meeting frequently in the major study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) school-based model, something that the authors ultimately concluded negated the benefits of the program for mentees.⁷ The negative effects of inconsistent meetings and premature relationship closure on mentees are now well-established in

the mentoring field; thus, peer programs need to emphasize the importance of identifying scheduling conflicts, as well as consistency and retention in their recruitment messages and screening processes.

Two recommendations (**B.1.1. Recommendation 2 and B.2.1. Recommendation 13.f.**) resulted from these observations about the high rates of early closure among high school student mentors. These recommendations suggest that peer mentoring programs need to address the importance of considering competing demands on time in recruitment messages, and screen volunteers for current or future schedule conflicts. Carefully reviewing each volunteer's schedule and extracurricular commitments with them, both at the beginning of the year and periodically throughout the program, will help them anticipate their future plans and make a realistic commitment.

Another approach to selecting mentors who may sustain a longer-term commitment to the program is to purposefully avoid recruiting mentors who are already leaders or who are heavily involved in many extracurricular activities. There is a natural inclination to recruit youth who are already strong peer leaders as mentors, but these youth may be so involved in time-consuming clubs and leadership roles in activities that they have too many scheduling challenges to commit consistently to the program.⁷ In fact, it might be beneficial to seek out students who have fewer competing interests or outside obligations to be peer mentors. They might embrace the opportunity to participate in this role and may even have more ability to benefit from the experience.²

Alternatively, peer programs might structure their services around shorter program cycles and choose to recruit mentors who can commit realistically to participating in the program for only one semester. This shorter program model might help to prevent

mentors quitting before the program ends and thereby, not disappointing mentees. For example, one study suggested that students with a variety of interests and commitments to other extracurricular activities should not commit to a program that lasts for a full academic year and should only commit to a program with a shorter program cycle.⁸ This type of program was rare in the literature reviewed, but it could provide mentees with the opportunity to form relationships with more than one mentor over the course of a school year (have a new mentor every semester, for example) or to simply emphasize a more focused relationship in a program that only lasts a few months. But regardless of the length of the program cycle, what's important is recruiting mentors who can deliver on what they have committed to.

Another challenge noted in the literature is that some mentors had transportation challenges that interfered with consistency in their attendance at mentoring meetings. Transportation issues and scheduling conflicts proved to be challenges in the most prominent evaluation of a peer mentoring program with high school mentors.⁷ That study found that the mentors with the best attendance records were those who were close to the school that hosted the mentoring program and who had staff who would arrange transportation to that site. In an attempt to eliminate barriers to consistency in attendance, another mentoring program even recruited mentors from a high school that was literally adjacent to the host elementary school, because the physical proximity of the two schools essentially eliminated travel challenges and helped build a stronger connection given that participants were from the same community.⁹

In addition to including commitment themes in recruitment messages, screening protocols should also include the use of evidence-based measures

to assess how committed youth volunteers are to working in and completing being a mentor **(E.2.6. Recommendation 21)**. Having mentors rate their commitment and provide examples of times they have been committed to some group or organization or achieving a goal is one strategy that programs might use. An example of a measure used to assess mentor commitment is can be found in Gettings and Wilson, (2014).¹⁰

CHARACTERISTICS OF MENTORS TO EMPHASIZE DURING RECRUITMENT AND SCREENING

There are a variety of recommendations that address the characteristics of effective mentors and the subsequent content that should be included in mentor recruitment messages and screening protocols.

Positive views about other youth

One robust finding in the peer mentoring literature is that mentors who have a positive attitude toward youth have mentees with more positive outcomes. For example, high school peer mentors who had higher scores on the Social Interest Scale,¹¹ suggesting that they viewed other children as “fun” and “interesting,” had stronger and more enduring connections with their mentees than high school mentors who had lower scores.¹² In contrast, mentors working with academically disconnected mentees who had negative attitudes toward youth had harmful effects on their mentees.¹² Thus, we recommend that recruitment messages communicate that the program is seeking volunteers who have positive attitudes toward youth **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.b.)** and that programs use screening protocols **(B.2.1 Recommendation 13.b.)** that include interview questions and evidence-based measures that assess positive attitudes toward youth as part of their eligibility criteria for acceptance into the program **(E.2.6. Recommendation 21)**.

Comfort level in dealing with challenging mentees

A second key topic for both recruitment messages **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.c.)** and screening protocols **(B.2.1. Recommendation 13.c.)** is that prospective peer mentors must be comfortable initiating conversations with peers. Younger mentees may be reticent or shy, at least in the beginning of the relationship, to initiate conversations with their older peers. Hence, the burden of getting to know one another may be primarily on the peer mentor, and it may be important that they can start conversations as well as not take it personally if it is challenging to engage their mentee. We are not suggesting here to only select students to be peer mentors who have already demonstrated leadership or exceptional interpersonal skills, because many students may not have had the opportunity to demonstrate leadership potential and yet, may be excellent mentors.³

Programs may want to interview prospective mentors and include questions that explore their experience (e.g., babysitting, camp counselor), comfort (e.g., not terribly insecure in the face of interpersonal challenges), and confidence (e.g., feeling efficacious to slowly build a positive relationship with their mentee) with managing the interpersonal challenges that may emerge when responsible for younger peers **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.a.)**. These self-cognitions may provide support to mentors when mentees appear to be disinterested, are uncooperative, or even misbehave. For example, in one program we reviewed, high school students were interviewed about their prior experiences working with young children, in addition to being asked more common questions, such as their goals for being a mentor in the program.¹³

Screening protocols can include additional interview questions to get a sense of the knowledge and skills that volunteers may bring to the program, while

being cognizant that these youth volunteers have not yet been trained or received match support by the program. Interview questions could ask about common scenarios that the program has faced in the past and ask prospective mentors about how they might handle possible challenges that they may face with their mentee **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.c.)**. The examples mentioned above provide a sample of possible challenging interpersonal situations that may occur with peer mentees (e.g., disinterest, uncooperativeness, misbehavior). Consistent with this recommendation, we noted that The Brotherhood (TB) program staff¹⁴ conducts a series of interviews with high-performing graduates of the Conservation Corps interested in being a mentor to assess for their appropriateness for mentoring middle school students. Similarly, in the Peer Group Connection program, student applicants participate in group problem-solving interviews where they discuss hypothetical peer-related problems and demonstrate solutions in role-playing.¹⁵

Willingness and ability to seek help when facing a challenge

A third topic for screening concerns openness to help-seeking. It is inevitable that peer mentors will have questions and may also face new challenges in building a relationship with their mentee. Openness to seeking help can vary dramatically across individuals, and in this type of program, it is particularly important that mentors don't try to hide the challenges they face or their perceived weaknesses from the mentoring program support staff. Perhaps because they are youth, peer mentors may feel prey to the imposter syndrome believing that if they admit that they need help, then they are revealing that they don't belong as a mentor in the program or that they are not competent as a mentor. Letting volunteers know in the recruitment materials that help-seeking is expected and normal, and that support and resources will

be available to them throughout their tenure in the program is a strong recommendation. In addition, the screening process and interview protocol should include some form of assessing the volunteer's openness to asking for help **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.b.)**.

A genuine interest in helping others

A fourth key topic for recruitment messages **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.d.)** and screening protocols **(B.2.1. Recommendation 13)** is having a history or interest in helping society, their community, or other people in their life. In general, one benefit of being a peer mentor is that they have the opportunity to serve in a meaningful role that will be new and stimulating for them, while also making a contribution to a younger peer and their community.¹⁶ Having this interest in helping does not mean that volunteers have to demonstrate that they have already served in leadership roles or been extensively involved in organizations in the past. We are not recommending that peer programs only seek out volunteers with deep passion or commitment to social causes. Rather we recommend that the program seek peer mentors who have demonstrated and expressed an interest in helping others.

This interest also suggests that their motivation to be a peer mentor may transcend having only self-serving goals and that this preexisting interest in helping others may sustain peer mentors to be committed across the life of the program. One of the reasons pupils gave for getting involved in peer mentoring was the perception that they could make a difference.¹⁷ In another example, in a group cross-age peer mentoring program where high school students served as mentors to middle school students, the screening process included assessing whether the prospective mentors had demonstrated any prior commitment to helping others or their school community.¹⁸ In



another example, program staff attended service club meetings at the high school in order to locate students who had already demonstrated an interest in helping others.¹⁹

There are many examples in the literature we reviewed of peer mentoring programs supporting mentees making a transition to a new setting (e.g., into high school or college). One common theme mentioned by peer mentors about their reason for participating in this type of program is that they looked forward to getting to know a first-year student and helping them settle into their new school. In a retrospective qualitative study of mentors' reports of the benefits of having been a peer mentor, most said they remembered how hard it was to be a first-year student in their school and they welcomed the opportunity to support a young person going through this process.³ Similarly, in the Victoria University Student Rover program, where mobile peer mentors provide “just-in-time” and “just-in-place” support to other students, mentors were selected who had struggled themselves with the transition to college, knew what those struggles felt like, and wanted to help their younger peers have a smoother transition to college.²⁰ Similarly, in an e-mentoring program for incoming college freshman by upperclassmen, mentors reported being motivated to volunteer in the program by their own memories of being a freshman and wanting to help others make a successful college transition.²¹

In addition to asking interview questions about an interest in helping others, we also recommend having volunteers complete a self-report questionnaire to assess their interest in helping others **(E.2.6. Recommendation 21)**.

Age gap between mentors and mentees

A fifth key topic to include in recruitment messages **(B.1.3. Recommendation 4.e.)** and screening protocols

(B.2.1. Recommendation 13.e.) is that volunteer mentors should be at least two years older than the target age of future mentees. An age gap of a minimum of two years is helpful in establishing a helping relationship with an older and “wiser” near-aged peer mentor, while the relative closeness in age helps mentees feel like their mentor is relatable and “cool.”⁸ However, we did observe examples of successful programs where mentors and mentees were in the same grades, but those programs were often focused on the delivery of very specific curricula and narrow goals, such as increasing healthy eating and exercise habits²² or welcoming immigrant youth into the school setting.²³ Another exception to this two-year age gap is when volunteers are alumni of the program and are familiar with the program's goals, objectives, model, and activities. Because the two-year age gap is more common across peer mentoring programs and may have some advantage over programs with a smaller age gap, programs should clearly articulate their requirements in their recruitment messages.

Ability to focus on the match

Finally, some CAMPs mentioned that peer mentors spent time socializing with one another rather than paying attention to their mentee. Children and adolescents are at a developmental stage where interacting with their friends and other peers is both developmentally appropriate and compelling. By taking attention away from their mentees, mentees may feel badly about themselves, their relationships, and their involvement in the mentoring program. Thus, the sixth key topic to assess in screening is how volunteers might minimize their time socializing with their same-aged peer mentors, who are also serving as mentors in the program, and focus their attention on their mentee. **(B.2.3. Recommendation 14.f.)**



BENEFITS AND MOTIVATIONS AROUND BEING A PEER MENTOR

The research suggests that messages used to recruit youth mentors include information about the benefits they will receive from being a mentor that focus on their personal growth, accomplishments, and résumé building opportunities (**B.1.3 Recommendation 4.a. and E.1.1. Recommendation 11**). Furthermore, during the screening process, we suggest that mentoring programs also assess *the degree to which each applicant may potentially benefit from being a mentor* in the program (**B.2.1. Recommendation 13.a.**) — something that might be especially important to consider if a program has more volunteers than open mentor slots. One program in our literature review noted that many of the high school students who signed up to mentor indicated an interest in pursuing a career in teaching, social work, or another people-oriented profession, and thought that being a mentor would be a good way to get experience in these types of roles, something the program could emphasize in future recruitment.^{24, 25} Similarly, in another program, peer mentors felt their mentoring role helped to prepare them for adulthood¹⁷ and future employment.²⁶ Many other benefits have been mentioned by alumni of peer mentoring programs, including improvements in their social, employment, and organizational skills, as well as increases in their self-confidence.^{27, 26} Another commonly mentioned intangible benefit of being a peer mentor, especially for youth with disabilities, is that it can help mentors to integrate and socialize with younger peers through an increase in their own social skills and having positive social experiences.²⁸ Specific academic skills that were enhanced by being a peer mentor included their study skills, learning strategies, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and their feeling of engagement and belonging in their school.^{29, 30, 31, 32, 33} Peer mentors have also reported benefits in terms of

improvement in their social and emotional skills, such as improved communication skills,³² leadership skills,²⁶ and increased empathy.¹⁹

In addition to communicating about the unique opportunities for growth, some mentoring programs also provide volunteer mentors with tangible incentives; however, there is some controversy and mixed findings in the mentoring literature, more generally, about providing volunteers with tangible or external incentives to be a mentor. Tangible benefits for peer mentors typically consist of receiving course credit or credit toward accomplishing community service hours that are required for high school graduation. The compensation of peer mentors may be problematic if they put in less effort after they are compensated or it results in their volunteering to participate for only self-serving reasons.³⁴ This question of the consequences of providing tangible incentives to peer mentors was studied in both the High School Bigs⁷ and Big Brothers Big Sisters Edmonton teen mentoring studies.³⁵ In both cases, approximately 40 percent of the mentors received course credit or were required to participate in the program, and in both studies, fewer benefits were found in matches with compensated mentors. Specifically, high school seniors who were Bigs and received course credit for being a mentor were less engaged in the program and more missed meetings than Bigs who did not get course credit.⁷ (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #6** for a great example of how one program utilized a class-based mentor training but avoided disengagement after participants had received credit.)

Despite these two negative findings in the literature, we concluded, based on other papers and conversations with many peer mentoring practitioners, that mentoring programs should consider giving course credit to peer mentors as an incentive,



especially if doing so provides more opportunities for training and support, and sustains their involvement in the program to fulfill their initial commitment (**E.1.3. Recommendation 12**). Community service and course credit incentives ranged in the literature from a token amount of credit to a one semester course to a year-long, course that met daily.^{19, 36, 37, 38, 39}

Tangible incentives for youth are also sometimes monetary. For example, one effective study was located that provided money and other academically related incentives as intangible benefits to being a peer mentor in the program (i.e., \$100 incentive, certificate of leadership achievement, letter of reference describing the teen's contributions to the project).⁴⁰ Other more minor tangible benefits mentioned by peer mentors include getting out of classes, going on field trips, and just having fun with their mentee.³

In addition, we advise that during the screening interview, staff ask volunteers about their motivation for wanting to be a mentor in the program (**B.2.3. Recommendation 14.c.**) and their hopes for the program (**B.2.3. Recommendation 14.d.**) which may help to weed out volunteers who are only interested in being a peer mentor for personal gain related to incentives or who have little or no interest in helping their younger peers. For example, in the Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science (GEMS) program, where college students provide STEM mentoring to middle and high school students,⁴¹ mentors are selected based on their interest, enthusiasm, and willingness to learn, as well as coming from a population that is underrepresented in the STEM disciplines.⁴² In another example, in the Peer Group Connection (PGC) program, students apply to be mentors in the spring of their junior year in high school, and answer essay questions about how they can contribute to the program and what they expect

to gain from the experience.¹⁵ Similarly, as part of the application process in another program, students are asked to answer essay questions about their reasons for wanting to participate in the program and what they hope to gain from the experience.¹⁸ These screening practices can help inform the creation of inclusion and exclusion criteria, and ultimately, improve the selection process.

Recruitment of Peer Mentors from Program Alumni or through Mentee Referral

There is a benchmark in the EEPM that states that mentoring programs should ask mentors to assist in recruiting new mentors. Similar to workplace mentoring program, this existing benchmark is particularly relevant for the peer mentoring context, because peer mentors can recruit students whom they already know to be a new peer mentor from their school, extracurricular activity group, or after-school program. This may be even easier in schools or other site-based programs where potential recruits are likely to already be aware of the program and may have some familiarity with the benefits, responsibilities, and challenges that their peers may have faced as mentors in the program. Thus, this benchmark takes on added significance in the recruitment of peer mentors, since youth can be positively influenced and motivated by one another. We recommend that the program asks peer mentors to assist in recruitment efforts, as well as recording testimonials from current or previous peer mentors to use in recruitment messages (**B.1.4. Recommendation 5**).

Another rich source for recruiting new peer mentors is to recruit and prioritize volunteers who have had previous experience as a *mentee* in the program (**B.1.3. Recommendation 4.f.**). In fact, research suggests that students who had prior experience as a mentee while in elementary school were significantly more likely to volunteer as mentors in high school.⁴³



Some peer mentors in the BBBS peer mentoring program in Ireland reported that they volunteered to be a mentor because they had been a mentee in the program and benefited from it.³ Interestingly, other mentors reported that they had not been a mentee in the program and regretted it, so they decided to volunteer to be a mentor.³ Thus, recruiting both former mentees and former students from a school that hosts a successful mentoring program can be a rich source for locating interested and motivated future mentors.

Former mentees are also important to recruit for programs that use a curriculum, since program alumni would have experience with and confidence in how to do the curriculum activities. For example, a STEM mentoring program for 6–12th graders recruits high school mentors from former mentees who may already understand the curriculum and goals of the program, and have the science skills and knowledge to properly facilitate STEM activities.⁴⁴

Using Alternative Methods to Screen Volunteers for Safety and Suitability

The EEPM outlines several procedures that a program should or potentially could use to screen volunteers for being safe and suitable mentors. Because most peer mentors are juvenile and juvenile court records are confidential (unless the juvenile is bound over to the adult criminal justice system), the benchmarks associated with conducting criminal background checks on volunteers are not exactly applicable. Alternatively, programs should conduct comprehensive criminal background checks on all the adults who will be present during mentoring program meetings, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries (**E.2.3. Recommendation 20**). If the mentoring program is a site-based program that is hosted in a school or preexisting after-school program, it is likely that all of the adults who are working or

volunteering in the setting have already been screened in a criminal records database. However, if not, then the safety of mentors and mentees, who are probably all minors, needs to be considered and protected.

In terms of sources of information about the background, character, skills, strengths, and potential challenges of participation of prospective mentors, programs will need to rely on alternate reputable and reliable sources. For example, adults or peers who know the prospective mentor well and can provide key information about them, may be the most important corroborating source of background information. We recommend (**B.2.5. Recommendation 15**) that the program interviews or requests letters of reference from peers, parents, teachers, or other adults to help them in the screening process. For example, in the BBBS Youth Mentoring Programme in Ireland, in-depth personal references from diverse sources (e.g., teacher, employer, faith leaders, coach) are obtained about prospective mentors.³ Similarly, the DO-IT program administrator calls mentors' references and conducts background checks, and then, applications are reviewed by a committee prior to acceptance into the program.⁴⁵

Some programs go beyond personal references and actually have adults nominate youth to be mentors in the program. For example, in the iPeer2Peer program, a one-to-one virtual mentoring program for adolescent mentees diagnosed with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), peer mentors, who also have a diagnosis of JIA, are nominated by their health-care team based on maturity, emotional stability, and verbal communication skills.⁴⁶ In another mentoring context, high school students are nominated to be peer mentors by their school guidance counselors based on demonstrating responsible behavior, leadership skills, and interest in participating in service projects.⁹



If the mentoring program is hosted in a school, staff have a unique opportunity to directly observe the quality of the volunteer’s socioemotional skills and relationships with others in a naturalistic setting. When possible, mentoring programs should observe prospective peer mentors in their school environment or after-school program (or request observations from other adults who know the prospective mentors well) to directly assess the quality of their relationships with peers, teachers, and other school staff members and to see how effectively they communicate and handle challenges **(E.2.2. Recommendation 19)**.

Recruit and Select the Right Mentees for the Program

In order to recruit and select the right mentees for the mentoring program, six recommendations for mentee recruitment and screening, and two recommendations for parent/guardian recruitment were developed.

Program staff need to set relevant criteria for the types of youth they hope to recruit. As with mentors, programs should emphasize the recruitment of the types of mentees who would specifically benefit most from the program, including benefitting from having a mentor who is a peer and being able to fully participate in the program **(B.2.8. Recommendation 16)**. Another consideration in the recruitment and screening of mentees is to assess whether they will show a positive and respectful attitude toward a near-age mentor **(B.1.6. Recommendation 9)**. One way to build a positive attitude toward having a near-age mentor is to share information about how mentees have benefited from this type of program. Some common “selling points” for mentees noted in the literature were having someone to talk to if they were having a problem and feeling more safe and secure in their school because of their relationship with their peer mentor.³ Mentors also thought the mentees were less likely to be bullied if they were in the program,

because mentees had people looking out for them in the school.³ Mentors also said that their mentees benefited from the activities and trips offered by the mentoring program, which were fun to do.³

Programs should also assess during the screening process whether mentees might have scheduling problems or other types of conflicts currently or over the life of the project that would interfere with their full attendance at mentoring meetings or who might terminate their relationship prematurely **(B.2.11. Recommendation 18)**. Although the literature suggests this tends to be more of an issue with mentors, mentees may also have busy schedules that evolve over the course of the school year. Helping mentees to anticipate future conflicts so that they don’t drop out of the program should be emphasized in the screening process.

The other factor that might influence a mentee’s ability to participate in the program is their own behavior. Because near-peer mentors are typically children or adolescents, they may not have the maturity, knowledge, or life experience to serve as a mentor to mentees with serious behavioral or emotional problems. In both the Cross-Age Mentoring Program and the High School Bigs studies, having a more behaviorally difficult mentee predicted lower-quality relationships (mentor-reported),⁴⁷ poorer mentor attendance,⁴⁸ and lower likelihood of mentors continuing in the program.⁷ Thus, peer mentoring programs may consider limiting or excluding youth with serious behavioral or emotional problems from being mentees in the program. Consistent with this idea, one study reported that high school mentors can be overwhelmed by being a mentor to children with high-needs resulting in declines in their own self-reported connectedness to school by the end of the program.⁴⁸ The last thing these programs want to do is cause harm to youth volunteers by pairing them



with mentees whose behavior is upsetting and beyond their ability to manage.

Furthermore, **B.1.7. Recommendations 10 and B.2.8. Recommendation 17** suggest that it is important to recruit, screen, and enroll mentees who are diverse in their behaviors, abilities, interests, and backgrounds. Diversity between mentees may be particularly important for peer mentoring programs that utilize a group mentoring model, so that no group has a concentration of youth with one type of personality, or with behavioral problems, which could make it challenging for peers to manage the group process (see the *Group Mentoring Supplement to the EEPM* for a lengthy discussion of this topic). In contrast, however, some peer mentoring programs may be designed to serve special and specific populations of youth. Even though the mentees may be similar in some way, it is still wise to consider diversity within the group on other characteristics, besides the one that defines the target population. In addition, these peer mentoring programs may have added screening procedures in order to determine eligibility for the program, such as having a diagnosis of LD, ADHD, or comorbid LD/ADHD,⁴⁹ diabetes,⁵⁰ or juvenile idiopathic arthritis.⁴⁶

Many mentoring programs, including peer, are experimenting with mentee-initiated mentoring, given the prevalence and positive findings emerging from studies of natural mentoring.^{51, 52} When mentees nominate and connect with mentors from their existing social network, both match members may be more committed and more likely to sustain a long-term relationship, because they are already familiar with and connected to one another. To capitalize on the burgeoning research on natural mentoring, **B.1.5. Recommendation 6** suggests that mentees identify and recruit peer mentors for themselves or for the program as a whole.

When parents hear of mentoring, they may expect that their child will be mentored by an adult, so it is important that recruitment messages to parents clearly state that mentors will be close in age to the mentees (**B.1.6. Recommendation 7**). Because these mentors are not adults, parents may have some concerns about the quality of the mentoring that their child may receive. In fact, in one program, although parents were given assurances that mentors went through a rigorous screening and training process, and all calls were monitored, parents stayed in the room during online match meetings even though they were asked to allow their child to have a private conversation with their mentor.⁵³ This observation suggests that some parents may have ongoing concerns about the type of influence that a peer mentor may have on their child and, thus, they may need additional assurances and ongoing communication with the mentoring program to alleviate their concerns. To address this type of concern, **B.1.6. Recommendation 8** suggests that mentoring programs clearly communicate to parents of prospective mentees how the peer mentors in the program are screened, trained, matched, monitored, and supported throughout their tenure in the program. In fact, most peer programs utilize a written consent form that explains the program to parents and reassures them about safety procedures used by the program, as well as providing them with a contact person whom they could call with any questions or concerns they may have about the program.³⁷ This recommendation is a best practice, in general, and highly relevant for the peer mentoring model.

TRAINING RECOMMENDATIONS

PREPARE PEER MENTORS FOR WHAT LIES AHEAD

Young people who are serving as mentors may have no previous personal experience with mentoring outside of what they have seen in media or heard from peers. Thus, they need a clear explanation and training on what defines mentoring.

Establish realistic expectations

Their youth and relative lack of experience in mentoring means that they may have little idea of what to expect from themselves as a mentor, their mentee, or their mentoring relationship. In fact, training on expectations significantly predicts both peer mentors' feelings of self-efficacy as a mentor and the quality of their mentoring relationships.⁵⁴ Given that having unfulfilled expectations and disappointment are common reasons expressed by mentors for ending their mentoring relationship early, we believe that peer mentoring programs need to spend even more time and attention with pre-match mentors on establishing realistic expectations (**B.3.2.b. Recommendation 25**). Professionals in the peer mentoring field concur that when peer mentors have unrealistically positive expectations, it can undermine the confidence of mentors and set them up for failure or disappointment.¹ High school peer mentors were found to have higher expectations and more positive attitudes than adult mentors, and had shorter matches, suggesting that training on having realistic expectations is important to include in pre-match training.⁵⁵ Some pre-match training topics should include an explanation of the typical life cycle of a mentoring relationship to understand that relationship development takes time; common challenges to relationship development and not get discouraged

and be persistent; how to communicate with youth who have different backgrounds, personalities, and communication styles; and that there should be frank, open, and supportive discussions of volunteers' hopes and concerns.^{46, 56, 53, 57, 58}

Explain the unique role of being a friend as a peer mentor

The role of being an effective mentor, including being able to leverage oneself and one's mentoring relationship to be a positive agent of change in the life of a mentee, is a complex and somewhat sophisticated idea, especially for a young person. In fact, even young adult mentors mentoring freshman to help them make a better transition to college reported difficulty in defining their role.⁵⁹ It requires understanding that you are not just being friendly, but also acting as a special and unique kind of friend who provides many of the qualities and supports of a mutual friendship, but the relationship is not designed to be completely reciprocal. Supportive, caring, reliable, consistent, and positive friendship where the needs, goals, and interests of the mentee take precedence is the cornerstone of good mentoring.⁵⁸ In fact, reciprocity and meeting the needs of both members of a friendship dyad is typically a goal of enduring friendships. However, this lack of full expected reciprocity in the friendship, and understanding how that manifests itself in everyday conversations and interactions between match members is a key training topic. Furthermore, friends typically get together at nights and on the weekends, at each other's homes, and may even date one another. These activities represent boundary issues that also need to be addressed with peer mentors in their training. Thus, we recommend that programs conduct additional training about roles and boundaries (**B.3.2.c. Recommendation 26**). Consistent with this recommendation, in one study, teen mentors rated understanding the roles and responsibilities associated



with being a mentor as one of the most helpful topics covered in their training and this topic was endorsed as important by 94 percent of the sample.³⁹

Provide training on being a role model, even though mentees are still youth

In addition to issues of reciprocity in the friendship role, friends also may share thoughts, feelings, desires, and hopes, as well as stories about their interpersonal experiences that can be prosocial or antisocial (e.g., using alcohol or other drugs, criminal or gang activity). Friends may also engage in both positive gossip and negative gossip about others, or may have been the victim of these forms of social aggression. Mentees will need help in managing their emotions about these types of experiences, and mentors need training on how to model and support mentees who have had these types of negative social experiences.²⁴ These topics should be included in pre-match training to help peer mentors understand how the conversations they have with their mentees could influence their mentee's feelings about themselves and others, and their mentee's behavior. For example, if a mentee shares a story about how a peer was ridiculed or excluded from a party, and the mentor laughs or appears to be approving of those behaviors, it can reinforce socially aggressive behavior in the mentee. Mentees are always observing their mentors for their mentors' reactions; hence, mentors need training in understanding what it means to be a role model to their mentee, as well as skills in how to consistently act as a positive role model. As one example of a program that includes this topic, training for mentors in a summer camp peer mentor program to teach mentees coding skills emphasized the importance of being a role model to mentees through their knowledge, effective instruction, and behaving appropriately in front of mentees.⁶⁰

Train peer mentors on their role of supporting the safety and health of their mentee

Another aspect of being a mentor in a peer program, and not just a friend, is that it comes with certain responsibilities related to maintaining the safety and health of the mentee. Friends are typically not required or expected to report their concerns about each other to adults; however, mentors are. Thus, we recommend that the program trains peer mentors on their policies and procedures related to sharing information and observations with program staff, especially when mentors have any concerns about the personal health or safety of their mentee. Mentors need training on the range of health and safety concerns that may arise, such as suspected abuse or neglect, being suicidal or homicidal, being victimized by a bully, bullying others, overly restricting food intake, bingeing or purging, engaging in self-harm, or using alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs (**B.3.3.e. Recommendation 35**). Any of these behaviors can be scary for a youth mentor to deal with in a peer mentee; thus, having a clear plan and protocol about what they should do can help to alleviate any concerns or worries that peer mentors may have.

Discuss program rules around confidentiality

Friends often have unspoken rules about what information is okay to share with others outside the friendship. There can be dire consequences of divulging a friend's secret that can range from feelings of betrayal and sadness to the dissolution of the relationship. The formality of keeping conversations and information confidential in a mentoring relationship is likely to be an unfamiliar concept to a youth mentor. In addition, the challenges and complexities of maintaining confidentiality in peer mentoring programs may be greater than usual if the



mentors and mentees attend the same school, have overlapping groups of friends, or live in the same neighborhood. Several professionals in the mentoring field believe that peer mentors need explicit training on this topic of when to break confidentiality and being comfortable with the adage, “If you see something, say something.”^{1, 24, 39, 61, 62} Furthermore, this topic is mentioned in the descriptions of several mentor training curricula in the literature on peer mentoring.^{61, 63} Hence, we recommend that mentors **(B.3.3.f. Recommendation 36)**, mentees **(E.3.5 Recommendation 40)**, and parents or guardians of mentees **(E.3.7 Recommendation 43)** all receive pre-match training on issues related to confidentiality. Professionals in the peer mentoring field concur that having a protocol of when and how to report health and safety concerns about mentees that is used to train peer mentors, will reduce concerns that school mental health staff may have about using youth as mentors.¹ Reinforcing this point is that one study found that many teen mentors did not demonstrate a clear understanding of the principles associated with confidentiality, privacy, and when to tell someone if they suspected their mentee to be unsafe or abused, and in fact, as a result of this study, the program revised their pre-match training to spend more time on this issue.³⁹

TAKE ADEQUATE TIME TO PREPARE YOUR MENTORS

Taken together, the need for going into greater depth on these topics and others that are described below, means that it is likely that peer mentors need more training on more topics than what is typically recommended as the minimum training required to prepare adults to be a mentor — it’s simply going to take more time and require more review of concepts and practicing of skills. In one of the more rigorous evaluations of peer mentoring, the greater amount of training that high school mentors received, the

better the match outcomes (e.g., longer lasting, higher quality, closer relationships); the more satisfied peer mentors were with the support they received from program staff; and the higher the mentors’ rated the program quality.⁵⁴ One thing to note from the same study is that excessive amounts of training may have backfired somewhat in that the more training peer mentors received, the less likely they were to want to be a mentor in the future.⁵⁴ It is important to note, however, that this result was only reported in one unpublished study and needs to be replicated.

Training of peer mentors ranged from being the minimum recommended time of two hours⁶⁴ to as long as eight hours⁶⁵ to two or three days^{66, 66} to eleven days spread out across a year.⁶⁷ A number of school-based, peer mentoring programs utilized a dedicated class period during the regular school day to provide training to prepare mentors for the mentoring experience in addition to providing ongoing training throughout the mentoring program.^{68, 69, 70} For example, the Big Buddy peer mentoring and tutoring program required high school mentors to enroll in a course that included daily training for the first three weeks of participation in the program before being matched with their mentees.⁶⁸ The pre-match training focused on the purpose and rules of the program, relationship-building skills, and guidance for mentors in planning all of their future sessions with their mentees.

It is worth noting that even though there is disparity in how much time programs dedicated to peer training, some peer mentors reported that they believed they needed more training to be effective,⁷¹ whereas others reported that the training that they received was sufficient.⁷² Even mentees have expressed the sentiment that mentors need adequate training and that when mentors are well prepared, it help mentees feel more confident in their relationship.⁷³



Professionals in the peer mentoring field agree that peer mentors need training, that mentees can get worse if mentors have no training, and that is an effective way to overcome most challenges faced in a peer mentoring program.¹ Notably, peer mentoring professionals disagreed about the duration and frequency of training that is needed for young mentors to be competent and feel efficacious.¹

We recommend that peer mentors receive more than two hours of pre-match mentor training (**B.3.1 Recommendation 22**). Even if training proves to be time consuming in order to address all of the topics needed to be an effective peer mentor, programs should still cover the topics needed to adequately prepare youth mentors. Programs should not be discouraged if volunteers drop out when they learn about training requirements or don't make it through this hurdle. Programs need to provide volunteers, especially young ones, with ample opportunities for learning, problem solving, and role-playing before they are matched, and pre-match training may be one of the best investments that a program can make in adequately preparing peer mentors to be successful.⁷⁴ One program took their pre-match training requirements so seriously that they set up a protocol to evaluate the competencies of their peer mentors after training and asked potential peer mentors to repeat the training program until they demonstrated proficiency in the basic tasks and skills related to mentoring.⁶²

TIPS FOR PEER MENTORS ON BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR MENTEE

Establishing a helping, mentoring relationship between a peer mentor and mentee may require some additional skills training for peer mentors.

Relationship development skills

Even if a peer mentoring program uses a curriculum, mentoring isn't just about completing activities together. A key goal of being a mentor is having a trusting and positive relationship; and good communication skills, especially active listening skills, are needed to accomplish this goal well.^{5, 24, 38, 39, 53, 62, 75, 76, 77} Training in relationship development skills should be included in the training protocol (**B.3.2.d. Recommendation 31**). This topic is especially important when the program uses a curriculum, so that mentors don't lose sight of the value of their relationship with their mentee, and that their relationship is not there just as a vehicle for delivering the program's activities. One example of a program that does a good job integrating relationship development topics in their training, in addition to training on the program's curriculum and activities, is a summer camp peer mentoring program for middle school mentees that teaches coding skills.⁶⁰ In this program, high school peer mentors received five days of training to prepare them for a summer camp mentoring experience — much of the training focused on teaching mentors how to use an app that was integral to the mentoring program, but also included training on being an effective mentor. Lead mentors helped facilitate the training and served as role models for new mentors. Strategies for using questions to help mentees problem solve, and giving constructive feedback were emphasized in the training, which also utilized role-play scenarios to help mentors practice these skills. Thus, training should also include the topic of prioritizing relationship development. (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #7** for a great example of how one program emphasizes socioemotional skills in their training and match activities to foster stronger relationships and personal growth for both mentors and mentees.)



Managing disengaged or misbehaving mentees

Mentees may, at times appear, to be disinterested in their mentor, mentoring relationship or activities, or mentoring program. They may also be uncooperative or misbehave at times. When mentees exhibit these types of disengaged behaviors, peer mentors, in particular, may be frustrated, personally offended, confused, or clueless about what to do. If peer mentors have never been a teacher, babysitter, camp counselor, coach, parent, or other type of childcare provider — which may be true of most mentors who are youth, themselves — they may be totally unfamiliar with how to manage the behavior of another person. Behavior management could be even more challenging to peer mentors who are volunteering in a group mentoring program, where training on group dynamics^{15, 18} and behavior management strategies are needed.¹⁴ Mentors in one study retrospectively reported that they struggled with managing the behavior of their mentees and would have appreciated more training on this topic.³⁹ We recommend that programs train mentors in how to manage interpersonal challenges that can emerge when supervising a mentee in the program **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 29)**.

Disengagement can evolve into conflict in the relationship or the perceived need for disciplinary intervention. Peer mentors need training on how to not become negative or punitive with their mentee, as well as the programs rules, policies, and procedures about what to do if conflict or disciplinary issues emerge **(B.3.2.e. Recommendation 33)** including who to contact for which issue, when to contact them, and how to contact them. Mentees **(E.3.4. b. Recommendation 38)** and parents or guardians **(E.3.6.b. Recommendation 41)** also need to be aware of these policies and procedures in the program.

Understanding mentees' challenges

Mentees are likely to be from diverse populations including youth who may have had exposure to chronic stressors (e.g., living in poverty, have an incarcerated parent) or, even, trauma (e.g., been the victim or witness to violence). Stress takes a toll on children's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that can manifest itself by interfering with relationship development, resulting in outcomes such as mentees being distrustful of others and their intentions, having conflictual relationships, being emotionally distant, or, in contrast, being clingy and needy. We recommend that pre-match training include helping peer mentors understand how exposure to stress and trauma can affect a youth and more important, how it can affect the development of a mentoring relationship **(B.3.2.h. Recommendation 34)**. These ideas were reflected in the conclusions from a survey with professionals in the peer mentoring field that mentors "need to hear on the front end that they are not there to fix every problem for their mentees but instead are meant to be a stable peer helper who can provide a source of support."¹

Relatedly, as noted in the Introduction of this resource, some peer mentoring programs are custom designed to serve specific populations of youth with a disability, impairment, or illness. Examples of peer mentoring programs of this type, including those for mentees with arthritis,⁴⁶ chronic illness,^{53, 57, 78} chronic pain,⁵⁶ Type 1 diabetes,⁷⁹ spinal cord injuries,⁸⁰ or other disabilities or impairment. ^{45, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86} Many of these programs also offer background training to peer mentors on the disability, impairment, or illness, and how it can affect the mentoring relationship, and we recommend including this information in pre-match training for peer mentors.



Whether or not a mentee has experienced high levels of stress or comes from a special population, many peer mentoring programs train peer mentors to take a strengths-based approach and focus on building assets in their mentees, rather than focusing on deficits or inadequacies.^{23, 87, 88, 89}

Making their mentee a priority

Mentors who are children or adolescents may see being in a mentoring program as a way to socialize with their friends or other peer mentors. In group mentoring contexts, peer mentors may be distracted by activities that other matches are doing or by wanting to talk with their friends who are also in the room. Mentors need to be trained to understand that the purpose of the program is to help the mentee and thus, the mentee needs to be the focus of their attention. They may need strategies to minimize socializing with their peers — the other mentors **(B.3.2.c. Recommendation 28)**. This type of focus can be difficult to do when peer mentors feel drawn to interacting with their friends or others their age, and it can be particularly hard if their relationship with their mentee is strained, disengaged, conflictual, or just not particularly close or rewarding. We recommend that mentors be trained in the importance of acknowledging the challenges associated with maintaining their attention on their mentee, especially when their mentee seems particularly difficult or needy **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 30)**.

Getting along with other mentors

In many programs, mentors work together very collaboratively to lead activities or co-mentor groups of mentees. In these programs, mentor training should also include information and activities that can help mentors get to know one another and get on the same page in terms of implementing the program's curriculum. In some programs, the bond that builds among the mentors is one of the keys to their

development and growth. See the Group Mentoring Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice, also available from MENTOR, for more guidance on how to prepare mentors to work with one another in group models. **(Also see Practice in Action Snapshot #8** for a great example of how one program builds comradery among cohorts of mentors.)

TRAINING ON PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS AND LOGISTICS

All mentoring programs need to train their prospective mentors on the program's policies and procedures; however, some responsibilities related to program administration and rules may be particularly unfamiliar to children and adolescents taking on the mentoring role. Peer mentors need to know where and when the program will take place. If the program is located at a site other than their school, they need to know how to enter and leave the facility, and what to do if they are running late or not able to attend a session **(B.3.2.a. Recommendation 23)**.⁶³

Peer mentors may not realize that they need to provide their mentoring program with feedback about their relationship with their mentee as well as the activities that they do together. This feedback may be in the form of logs, written notes, texts, or emails, or may occur during in-person conversations at the mentoring site.⁹⁰ Whatever the form of communication, peer mentors may not be used to paying attention to their relationships, and sharing their thoughts and feelings about their relationships with others. Helping peer mentors understand the need for monitoring and how being able to provide mentors with match support will be instrumental to the program should be included in training **(B.3.2.a. Recommendation 24)**.



TRAINING ON UTILIZING A CURRICULUM EFFECTIVELY TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONSHIPS

Peer mentoring programs commonly use a curriculum that includes activities that matches can do together. There are some professionals in the peer mentoring field who believe — and some data that supports — that when programs have minimal goals for the mentoring relationship, the mentee outcomes are stronger.⁶⁴ However, more research is needed on this topic to better understand the role of structure and program goals on outcomes. The approach of using a curriculum, nonetheless, can alleviate a common challenge reported by mentors that they don't know what to do with their mentee when they are together, their mentee doesn't have any ideas of things to do, and they feel pressure and responsible to fill their time together in a fun and productive way.

If programs do not use a curriculum, then mentors (and mentees) would benefit from training on “viewing their relationship as a collaborative enterprise”⁹¹ and designing the activities that they will do together. In fact, the more collaborative the decision-making in matches, the better the relationship quality, reported by both match members, and the less mentees reported being dissatisfied with their match.⁹¹ Building on the advantages of using a curriculum in peer mentoring programs, we recommend that programs train volunteers on the importance of preparing and doing activities with their mentees **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32.a.)** and how doing specific activities together can contribute to achieving program goals **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32.b.)**

Although using a curriculum can be helpful, it also presents certain challenges to the program. For example, if mentors are expected to lead activities, they need to understand them or have previous

experience doing them, particularly, if they involve equipment or complicated steps (e.g., STEM activities, social skills training programs, text messaging).^{90, 92, 93, 94} Thus, the program needs to train peer mentors on how to deliver the program content or activities with both fidelity and enthusiasm^{22, 40} **(B.3.2.c. Recommendation 27** and **B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32.c.)**, as the engagement of the instructor who leads curriculum activities is a key predictor of program success. Consistent with both of these recommendations, in a group peer mentoring context, mentors need training on how to facilitate positive group interactions and conversations among group members, while still being able to conduct group activities.

Programs have also benefitted from the insights of peer mentors about the activities in curricula, and some programs actually include peer mentors in designing the program and creating the activities as part of the program experience.^{90, 95, 96} For example, in a STEM mentoring program for middle and high school students, the Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science (GEMS) program, near-peer college mentors develop age-appropriate laboratory protocols beginning with conceptualizing and designing an experiment to presenting the findings at a ceremony at the conclusion of the program with assistance from a research scientist.⁴¹ We recommend that programs develop avenues and strategies for peer mentors to provide feedback and input on curriculum activities on a regular basis **(B.3.2 a. Recommendation 24)**. This approach will help not only in building a curriculum that is more developmentally appropriate, engaging, easy to implement with fidelity, and effective, but will also contribute to building leadership skills, and feelings of self-efficacy and self-confidence in their peer mentors.



Another common challenge to using a prescribed and pre-prepared curriculum is that it may not reflect the individual goals or interests of the mentee, and mentors may be so focused on delivering the curriculum that it interferes with building their mentoring relationship. Thus, peer mentors need training in how they can do curriculum activities with their mentee, while still focusing on building their relationship **(B.3.2.d. Recommendation 32d)**. Professionals in the peer mentoring field agree that when a curriculum is used, peer mentors need training on how to use it, while still prioritizing the relationship over the execution of the curriculum activities.¹

In addition to training on mentoring in general, programs that use a curriculum, will need to spend more time training their mentors if they expect them to implement activities with competence, feelings of self-efficacy, and confidence **(E.3.1 Recommendation 37)** and addressing these issues will result in programs needing more than the minimum required training length of two hours. If a curriculum is adopted by the mentoring program and seen as instrumental in achieving the program goals, then this additional time spent in training mentors in the purpose, goals, and steps in conducting program activities will likely be fundamental to program success.

TRAINING MENTEES AND PARENTS ON HOW TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM

Because mentors are typically adults and considered to be “older and wiser” than mentees, respect for the mentor’s behavior and actions, and deference to the program’s rules of engagement with mentors are taken more for granted. However, when mentors are near in age to mentees, there is the danger that mentees may be disrespectful or negative toward their mentor. Generally speaking, the more proactive (e.g., soliciting information and feedback) a mentee is, the more peer mentors are interested in the

mentoring relationship,^{47, 97} so the mentee’s attitude and engagement are important for building mentor commitment and a positive mentoring relationship. In addition to the importance of the mentee’s attitudes and behavior, parents can also impact the relationship. For example, parents may inadvertently reinforce a negative attitude toward a peer mentor in their child, if the parent does not respect the program’s goals, the mentor’s role in achieving them, and the fact that the mentor is a dedicated, well-trained, supported, and caring volunteer. In addition, mentees need to know that feedback about their mentor, program activities, and their relationship with their mentor are valued and will be influential in program decisions and support. Thus, programs need to train mentees **(E.3.4 e. Recommendation 39)** and their parents or guardians **(E.3.6.e. Recommendation 42)** on how to participate in the program, the importance of having a positive and respectful attitude, how to provide feedback about what they like and dislike about the experience, and how to advocate on behalf of the mentee with their mentor and with the mentoring program staff. **(See Practice in Action Snapshot #9** for a great example of how one program involves parents in special weekend events to great benefit for all.)



MATCHING AND INITIATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Practices for matching cross-age peers in a mentoring relationship are informed by the research on mentoring, the broader literature on peer relations, and recommendations from the Working Group. The goal of these recommendations is to promote the creation of the most effective cross-age peer mentoring relationships, taking into consideration the unique opportunities and constraints of this type of mentoring. There are four specific recommendations for characteristics of mentors and mentees to consider when making matches: their relationship history, behavioral history, shared vocational or extracurricular interests, and stated matching preferences.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS WHEN MAKING PEER-TO-PEER MATCHES

Many peer mentoring programs take place within schools or after-school programs through which program participants may have a history of interactions or even prior relationships. In addition to the standard list of mentor and mentee characteristics to consider when making matches, peer mentoring programs should consider the prior relationship history of peer mentors and mentees (**B.4.1 Recommendation 44**). Preexisting negative relationships between program participants could interfere with the development of a positive mentoring relationship and reduce the likelihood that program participants will have a positive experience and reap the benefits of the peer mentoring program. For example, if a program participant has been the victim of bullying in the past, mentoring program staff should not match that individual with a peer who was the perpetrator of the bullying experiences. Information about this kind of history should be gathered from

both the participant, their parent or guardian, and any other available sources such as school staff (e.g., teachers or counselors) who have insight into these interactions.¹

On the other hand, preexisting positive relationships between program participants may give them a foundation to build on to achieve the goals of the program and contribute to both participants experiencing benefits from the program. It should also be noted that if a preexisting relationship exists, it might be of greater benefit to one participant in the relationship and that should be considered as well in the context of the program's goals. Avoiding matching participants who already know one another helps ensure all participants are starting their relationships at the same level of familiarity.⁷⁶ If a goal of the program is to promote greater connections between program participant and help participants meet new people, then matching individuals with a current or previous relationship may limit the opportunities to meet new people and make new connections.

In addition to considering the relationship history between program participants, the behavioral history of both mentors and mentees should be taken into consideration when matching. This can include a history of delinquent, risky, or aggressive behavior. Children who demonstrate aggressive behaviors are at a greater risk of being disliked and rejected by their peers, which can further contribute to aggressive behaviors.^{98, 99, 100, 101, 102} However, increased contact between children who have a history of externalizing behaviors and peers who do have a history of these behaviors can promote positive outcomes among both groups of children.¹⁰³ For example, a program for kindergarten and first grade students that paired children with behavior problems with a buddy who did not have a history of behavior problems demonstrated that both groups of children had improved social skills



at the end of the program.¹⁰⁴ If programs choose to include or target individuals who have a history of negative behaviors, the mentors and mentees may need additional training and support to ensure they have the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to have an effective mentoring relationship.

For site-based peer mentoring programs that conduct group mentoring or schedule multiple mentor-mentee pairs to meet in the same space at the same time, it is recommended that these programs avoid having mentors and mentees who have a history of engaging in risky health or aggressive behaviors to meet in the same room at the same time **(B.4.1 Recommendation 45)**. The goal of this recommendation is to reduce the potential for individuals with a history of deviant behavior to promote or exacerbate these behaviors in peers who have a similar history and increase their own negative behaviors during their participation in the mentoring program. The mentoring program should be a space for mentors and mentees with a history of unhealthy, aggressive, or antisocial behaviors to enhance their prosocial skills through positive peer interactions and programs should offer a setting and design that supports these opportunities. This recommendation is based on findings from the research on adolescent group psychotherapy indicating that therapeutic groups are less effective in terms of changing aggressive or delinquent behaviors when the groups include only antisocial youth compared to groups with a mix of youth who do and do not have a history of antisocial behavior.¹⁰⁵ Children modify their behavior to the behaviors of the peers they associate with, which, as noted in the Introduction, is one of the main elements of positive change these programs offer. Mixing groups of young people who do not demonstrate antisocial behaviors with those who do have a history of displaying these behaviors has been shown to reduce antisocial behaviors without negatively impacting young people

who do not demonstrate antisocial behaviors.¹⁰⁶ Given the relative inexperience of cross-age peer mentors, it might be more difficult for them, and for program staff, to manage the behavior of mentees if there are multiple mentees in a room who are disruptive or aggressive, which is another reason to avoid grouping participants with these behaviors in the same space during their participation in the program.

It is important to note that this matching recommendation applies to both mentors and mentees. Mentors who have a history of risky health or aggressive behaviors should not necessarily be prohibited from participating as a mentor, although this depends on the screening criteria of the mentoring program. If programs do accept mentors with a history of disruptive or aggressive behavior, then they must consider how this history will impact matching and where mentors will be meeting with their mentee and interacting with other program participants.¹⁰⁷ If it is not possible to have participants in separate rooms, then having a large space that allows mentor and mentee dyads to meet together at a distance from other dyads has been suggested as a strategy to reduce distractions and support the implementation of the program.² Having enough physical space between participants further benefits all participants such that they are better able to focus on their conversation and shared activity, with fewer distractions from other matches meeting near them.

Matching based on interests is a general recommendation for all mentoring relationships,¹⁰⁸ it is given special emphasis for cross-age peer matching. Specifically, it is recommended that mentor and mentee matches are based on shared extracurricular or vocational interests **(B.4.1 Recommendation 46)**. Since peer mentoring programs typically utilize younger, less experienced, similar-aged mentors, they need additional support and guidance when



it comes to initiating activities and conversations with their mentee. Having common interests to build on, particularly at the beginning of the mentoring relationship, will help facilitate the development of the mentoring relationship by supporting the exploration of the shared interests between the mentor and mentee.¹⁰⁹ Many cross-age peer mentoring programs emphasize this practice, although it has not been specifically tested in the research.^{5, 110} For example, one study describes a STEM-focused cross-age peer mentoring program that involved female high school student mentors who were matched with fourth and fifth grade girls based on their interests in specific subjects and extracurricular activities. Female mentees who participated in this program had higher perceptions of science careers than girls who participated in a similar science program but did not receive mentors and had similar perceptions of science careers as science majors and STEM professionals,¹¹¹ suggesting that a program following this practice may enhance the impact of the program. To support the implementation of this practice, interest questionnaires that are administered during program enrollment are often used to help participants identify their extracurricular or vocational interests, which can be used to inform the matching process.^{112, 113}

Many peer mentoring programs at the college level emphasize matching based on surface level interests such as similar major and gender,¹¹⁴ which suggests that these programs assume for college students that these basic similarities in interest are enough for establishing a relationship. These programs may also trust that college-age participants are mature enough to navigate differences that might arise between themselves and their match partner and continue to develop a relationship and work together on the goals of the program. However, peer mentoring programs involving younger participants cannot expect that

mentors and mentees have the same level of maturity or ability to connect with one another without multiple common interests or experiences that give them opportunities to bond given their difference in age and maturity.¹¹⁵

CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPANTS TO EXPRESS THEIR MATCH PREFERENCES

Whenever possible, cross-age peer mentoring programs should consider conducting a meet-and-greet group-matching event that allows all participants to first meet, interact with one another, and then provide feedback to the program on their match preferences **(E.4.2 Recommendation 47)**. Given the relative inexperience and unfamiliarity of peer mentoring program participants, this event should be structured and might include icebreaker activities that allow everyone an opportunity to introduce themselves or other activities that give participants a chance to meet and connect with one another. It is important that all participants have a chance to meet one another at least once during this event through interactive activities or games. The CAMP mentoring program, which has demonstrated positive impacts on mentee's self-esteem, social skills, and behaviors⁶ utilizes the meet-and-greet matching activities at the beginning of the program to generate enthusiasm for the program and give mentors and mentees an opportunity to express their matching preferences.¹¹⁶ Following this event, prospective mentors and mentees can be privately asked about who they enjoyed talking to and who they might prefer to be matched with based on their feelings of comfort or connection around shared interests and goals. It is recommended by the CAMP program that participants should not rank potential mentors or mentees but rather list the individuals they enjoyed meeting and talking to; if there were individuals who stood out to them during the meet-and-greet event.⁵



Another approach is to conduct a meet-and-greet event as the first activity so matches can get to know one another before beginning the curriculum component of the program.^{117, 118} When mentees are given the opportunity to choose their own mentors, both mentors and mentees report that they feel more similar to one another and mentees are more proactive in seeking out guidance from their mentor.¹¹⁹ It is important to emphasize that the program cannot guarantee they will be matched with their preferred person, but that this information is taken into consideration during the matching process.

PREPARING PARTICIPANTS FOR THEIR MATCH AND FIRST MEETING

There is one specific recommendation for the initiation of peer mentoring relationships. Once a match determination has been made by the mentoring program, both mentors and mentees should be privately told, in advance, who they have been matched with prior to the first meeting (**E.4.6 Recommendation 48**). This provides participants with an opportunity to ask questions about this person and prepare for the first meeting. This practice for initiating peer mentoring relationships is designed to help reduce anxiety about the first meeting and generate excitement among program participants while ensuring the relationship gets started on the right foot.

MONITORING AND SUPPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

Cross-age peer mentors are typically inexperienced serving in a mentoring role and working independently with a person near to them in age on a common goal. Mentees are also likely unfamiliar with their role and how to engage with their mentor or may be intimidated to work with an older peer. The ability of student leader mentors to develop strong connections with mentees, follow through with their responsibilities and commitment to the program, and effectively address inappropriate behavior of mentees during the meeting times were reported as significant challenges in a peer mentoring program.¹ Training goes part of the way toward preparing mentors and mentees for their experiences in the program, but once their participation begins, mentors and mentees require ongoing monitoring to ensure they are fulfilling their respective obligations, following the program rules and policies, and working toward the goals of the program. Additional support for program participants may be required to help them succeed or to troubleshoot any issues or concerns that arise during their participation in the program. In a large evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters High School Bigs program, the more the high school peer mentors communicated with program staff, the more the mentees benefitted from the mentoring relationship compared to both their non-mentored peers and their peers who had a mentor but had less communication with the program staff.⁷ In addition, peer mentors' perceptions of the quality of the support they received also contributed to longer mentoring relationships.⁷ Thus, cross-age peer mentoring programs should ensure they have the capacity to provide substantial monitoring and support of program participants.



MONITORING PROGRAM ACTIVITIES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Site-based cross-age peer mentoring programs have the advantage of being able to directly observe mentoring sessions with program participants (**B.5.1 Recommendation 49**). Whenever possible, direct observations should be done periodically throughout the program and should follow a protocol that reminds program staff to observe the specific aspects of the mentoring relationship, activities, conversation, and any other relevant elements of the mentor-mentee interactions that can inform monitoring and support. Program staff should be on the lookout for program participants who are not engaged with their mentor or mentee or in the program activities, which could be a sign that the mentoring relationships is struggling for some reason. Observing matches on multiple occasions will provide staff with the chance to learn how the relationship is developing and give program staff first-hand information they can use during match support conversations to provide tailored support in areas that mentors and mentees might not have thought to ask for themselves. Interviews with program coordinators of a peer mentoring program reported that regularly scheduled check-ins with the student leader mentors was critical to the success of the program.¹ This scheduled check-in time provided an opportunity to address the challenges experienced by mentors and offer additional training, supervision, and advice, and to get the mentors actively involved in planning and implementing the peer mentoring program activities.

In-person observations also afford an opportunity for program staff to provide real-time feedback to mentors (**B.5.9 Recommendation 52**) to support them in completing an activity with their mentee or dealing with a specific challenge in their relationship. A dedicated class during regular school hours for mentors or dedicated consistent meeting time for

mentors is one approach to providing real-time feedback and support.^{68, 69, 70} For example, one program designed to support the mentee's transition to high school required peer group leaders to enroll in a daily course that served to prepare mentors for the weekly meeting with their group of mentees and then to debrief at the end of the week, following the peer group session.⁶⁹ Another option is to have a brief, regularly scheduled check-in with mentors to discuss concerns and get feedback and support.⁶¹ Since these relationships often have mutual benefit for mentors and mentees,^{3, 9, 61} programs should consider how they can provide feedback that will help enhance the mentor's skills and goals, such as their leadership and communication skills.

To provide the required level of monitoring and support to program participants, it is recommended that site-based, cross-age peer mentoring programs have at least two staff members available for every mentoring session that involves more than one mentor and mentee pair (**B.5.9 Recommendation 53**). This allows for one staff member to coordinate the program activities and the other to actively monitor and support participants in real time. Poorly supervised peer programs can provide an opportunity for negative peer interactions and contribute to increased negative behaviors among program participants¹⁰⁶ and can contribute to participant safety and risk management problems.¹²⁰ Program coordinators of a peer mentoring program reported their biggest challenge was not having enough time to plan, supervise, and evaluate the program in addition to their other responsibilities,¹ thus any additional staff can help share the workload so program staff can devote an adequate amount of time to major tasks of running the program.



Having enough staff on hand also helps ensure that all participants are staying on task, particularly when multiple mentor-mentee matches are meeting in one space, such as a school gym or cafeteria. In an evaluation of the Big Brothers Big Sisters high school Bigs school-based program, youth who met with their mentor on their own reported that their mentor and the mentoring relationship were more focused on them and their goals compared to mentees who met with their mentor in a large group setting.⁷ This suggests that the mentors may have been more focused on socializing with other mentors or distracted by the larger group setting.⁷ The staff members present during mentor and mentee meetings would ideally have experience managing groups of youth and have a connection to the setting in which the program is meeting (e.g., teacher, counselor, teacher aide) as it can be challenging to come into these settings without some prior experience or extensive training.⁵

In addition to observing program participants, program staff should regularly conduct formal check-ins with mentors where they **solicit input and/or feedback from peer mentors about program activities for matches to do together (B.5.1 Recommendation 50)**. While many cross-age peer mentoring programs provide participants with a curriculum or predesigned activities to complete, program participants may also appreciate the opportunity to generate or help plan future activities.^{69, 90, 96, 121} This acknowledges the mentors' independence and creativity and supports their investment in the program. A peer mentoring program that included high school mentors who were trained to complete tasks or activities directed by the mentee's teacher also allowed mentors some freedom in the types of activities they completed with their mentee within the constraints of the program requirements.⁶⁸ Mentors were charged with selecting a relationship building activity for each mentoring

session and if the mentee's teacher did not designate a tutoring activity for the mentoring session, then mentors were instructed to identify an appropriate activity that would serve the academic goals of the program. Mentoring sessions also allowed time for fun activities, such as computer games, playground, or outside playtime for matches, which were typically chosen by the mentor.⁶⁸ Another program encouraged mentors and mentees to collaboratively develop activities following a period of structured activities at the beginning of the program.⁹ Peer mentoring programs must strike a balance between playful, relational goals and instrumental goals (e.g., homework help, STEM activities).⁵ Getting feedback from mentors during monitoring check-ins can help program staff gauge each match on the balance between these two types of goals and help mentors adjust their approach as needed.

To further augment the monitoring of mentoring relationships, mentors need to **record information about the activities they did with their mentee during each match meeting**, especially if the activities differed from what they were instructed to do based on a preset curriculum (**B.5.8 Recommendation 51**). Asking mentors to reflect on what they did with their mentees and how the activities relate to the goals of the program helps programs ensure that peer mentors are on the right track and staying focused on the goals of the program during their meetings with their mentee. Gathering this information is particularly important for cross-age peer mentoring programs that do not meet at a set location. This information could be gathered through a simple, brief checklist or form that is developmentally appropriate based on the age of the mentor. For example, the Big Buddies program required mentors to submit the activity worksheets that included activities for building their relationship, which they used during their mentoring sessions, as a way of monitoring the mentoring

relationships.⁶⁸ Another program had debrief sessions with mentors after each peer mentoring meeting to discuss how things went during the meeting with their mentee, reinforce the planned activities, assess the alignment of the meeting with the overall program goals, and make plans for the next meeting with their mentee.²² These monitoring practice recommendations will inform the unique support practices for cross-age peer mentoring relationships.

ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING MENTORS

Peer mentors will make mistakes, such as not fulfilling their commitment, not being prepared for meetings with their mentee, or behaving in ways that are not setting a good example for mentees, and programs should have a plan in place for how to address these challenges to their participation in the mentoring program.¹ This plan may include post-match training for mentors on specific topics that help them learn how to handle a similar situation in the future or avoid other common challenges in a peer mentoring relationship. Several specific topics are recommended for ongoing, post-match training for peer mentors based on recommendations from the Working Group, including **training on the ongoing challenges related to collaborative decision-making, boundary issues, and other issues that may be unique to mentoring relationships between close-aged peers (B.5.11 Recommendation 54)**. The similarity in age and unfamiliarity with the mentor role could present ongoing challenges to mentors in terms of making decisions about what to do during their match meetings as well as boundary issues. For example, mentors who are older may feel that they should be making all the decisions in mentoring relationship and the mentee may fall into this pattern of interactions without support from their mentor in making collaborative decisions. Peer mentors need additional training in sharing power and decision-making when interacting with their mentee to encourage their

mentee to participate in the decision-making process. (**See Practice in Action Snapshot #10** for an example of how one program uses ongoing training to enhance the mentoring experience.)

There is also the potential for boundary issues in peer mentoring relationships such as mentees perceiving their mentor as a close friend or even older sibling when the mentor does not share this perspective or even the potential for one member of the match to develop romantic feelings for their partner. These situations cross important boundaries in mentoring relationships and mentors need training on how to identify potential boundary issues and what to do when these issues arise. As noted by Karcher in the CAMP mentoring program model,²¹ the social-cognitive skills of mentors in the program should be taken into consideration when planning training related to decision-making and boundaries. Depending on the age of mentors, they may still be developing the ability to take the perspective of others, such as their mentee, to reflect on their mentee's perspective, or use their mentee's perspective to influence their behavior. For example, a mentor may perceive a mentee's reluctance to help make decisions about their shared activities as dislike or disinterest rather than understanding the mentee's perspective; that he or she is nervous about meeting a new, older peer. This difficulty with perspective-taking could cause challenges in the mentoring relationship that should be addressed in ongoing training.

A final recommendation for support is that peer mentoring programs should also go above and beyond the general recommendation for thanking mentors by **recognizing their contributions multiple times during the course of the program** to validate and recognize their contributions (**E.5.4 Recommendation 55**). Peer mentoring programs place greater emphasis on the mutual benefits of the program experience for both



mentors and mentees; however, given their relative immaturity and inexperience with helping others in a structured program, peer mentors likely need additional encouragement and support to continue to persist in their participation in the program. Peer mentor attendance is associated with poorer outcomes for mentees in a program involving high school mentors.⁶ Mentor recognition can take many forms from a personal note to a certificate or small gift and may involve input from the mentee as well, on occasion, to include their voice in recognizing the mentor's contributions.

CLOSURE RECOMMENDATIONS

ENHANCED CLOSURE PROCEDURES FOR PEER MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

Preparation for the closure of peer mentoring relationships should be supported throughout the duration of the program. As with all mentoring relationships, both mentors and mentees should be given the opportunity to reflect on their relationships and end the mentoring experience in a healthy, positive way. This is true for both prematurely ending mentoring relationships and relationships that have lasted the duration of the program. There are two specific recommendations for closure of cross-age peer mentoring relationships, which reflect unique aspects of peer mentoring programs. **First, upon ending the peer mentoring relationship, program participants may have opportunities to interact with one another** through school or community settings (**B.6.7 Recommendation 56**) and this must be taken into consideration during the closure process. When discussing closure with mentors and mentees, the program should acknowledge the potential for future contact between former mentors and

mentees and discuss with program participants how they should interact with one another. During this conversation, the program should guide participants in deciding whether they want to acknowledge how they know one another and what information might be confidential that was learned through their participation in the program.

ENDING ON A POSITIVE NOTE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EFFORTS OF MENTORS AND MENTEEES

Finally, the program should host a final celebration meeting or event for matches, when possible, to publicly honor and recognize the hard work that youth did in the program, and reiterate key messages and lessons learned from the program (**E.6.2 Recommendation 57**). A final celebration event provides an opportunity for formal closure of the mentoring relationship and recognition of the efforts of mentors and mentees and the benefits of the program for all participants. A celebration party that includes everyone involved in the program (e.g., family and school or site staff, if relevant) and providing certificates of participation for mentors and mentees, are often described as components of the final celebration meeting.^{9,68} One program asks mentees to create a small, handmade gift and write a note of appreciation to their mentor to give to them at the final celebration event.⁹ An important benefit of peer mentoring programs is that mentees often desire to become leaders and peer mentors themselves after their time as a mentee has ended, if they feel they have benefitted from and had a positive experience in the program.³ A final celebration and positive ending to their experience as a mentee can help increase the likelihood that they will want to be involved in the program in the future.



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PRACTICE IN ACTION SNAPSHOTS

This section provides brief examples of how many of the practice recommendations and program design considerations mentioned throughout this resource can look in real-life programs. Members of our Peer Mentoring Working Group contributed these in an effort to highlight key aspects of their programming and help other practitioners see how some of these practices come to life in various program contexts.

Snapshot #1 – Peer Mentors Working Collaboratively to Support the Entire Student Body in College Advising Corps

College Advising Corps (CAC) advisers are near-peer mentors with full-time placement in partnering high schools. In their adviser role, mentors provide college preparation support and coaching to all students with a focus on the needs of the graduating senior class. CAC advisers play a transformative role in schools by fostering a college-going culture in partnership with school staff; they provide supplemental support to overburdened school counselors by spending one-on-one time with students and their families to ensure they have relevant information with which to make informed decisions about postsecondary options. The program has a strict policy that partnership and placement of advisers does not compromise current professional staffing — any counseling staff reductions are an immediate violation of the terms of the program and could result in removal of our college adviser.

In partnership with school counselor(s), CAC advisers serve as experts, mentors, champions, and guides to students. Each school must identify an on-site staff member to provide supervision, guidance, and support to their assigned CAC adviser. The on-site staff member will serve as the primary point of contact between the CAC program and the school and provide mentorship and support to the adviser throughout their placement.



Snapshot #2 – How Search Institute’s Developmental Relationships Framework Can Support Peer Mentors in Recognizing the Types of Help Peers Can Benefit From

There is widespread agreement that positive peer relationships are critical to youth development. Search Institute’s current research focuses on learning what it takes to ensure all young people experience developmental relationships: strong and consistent connections that provide youth what they need to be and become their best selves. Search Institute research has identified five key elements that make relationships developmental: Express Care, Challenge Growth, Provide Support, Share Power, and Expand Possibilities.

Developmental relationships are sustained by the contexts in which they are experienced, including peer mentoring programs. Search Institute has partnered with a number of organizations to learn what it takes to create a context that promotes developmental relationships among peers. Several crucial factors have emerged across diverse programs and settings.

One of these factors is relational mindsets. For example, relationships must be seen as something mentors, mentees, and program staff can affect. Other critical factors are relational skills and intentionality, with all these players constantly looking for opportunities to strengthen relationships through everyday interactions, reflecting on what works and what doesn’t, and continually developing and trying out new strategies. Inclusion and equity are other critical factors. These require acceptance of differences and adapting our relational approach based on the unique needs of each individual.

Developmental relationships are nurtured within and through program activities and cultivated through intentional but informal interactions. An organization makes this happen, first and foremost, through organization-wide training. Because real learning happens through practice, the Search Institute encourages following up an introductory training with ongoing “touch backs” to the training, often as part of staff meetings. This allows staff to reflect on their ongoing practice, problem solve, and continually innovate. This is reinforced by training supervisors to integrate developmental relationships into their staff coaching and through organization-wide communication, rituals, and recognition that promote a broad and sustained commitment to nurturing sustainable, strong developmental relationships among peers.

You can learn more about developmental relationships on the Search Institute website at: <https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/developmental-relationships-framework/>



Snapshot #3 – Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth’s Approach to Aligning Mentor Training and Program Goals

Saving Lives & Inspiring Youth’s (S.L.I.Y.) cross-age peer mentors are trained for six hours using a curriculum that is modeled after nationally recognized mentoring organizations trainings utilized by local nonprofit partners and building on a previously studied civic engagement curriculum. The curriculum includes modules authored specifically for S.L.I.Y., addressing coping with trauma and loss, vocational and academic supports, and training youth on researcher skills. Training topics include the definition of mentoring, how to be an effective mentor, and how to notice verbal and nonverbal communicative signs from their mentees. To thoroughly prepare mentors, youth are encouraged to ask questions about life, describe their relationship history with their caregivers or other adults, and role-play effective mentor interactions. The activity manual consists of handouts and resource sheets to help youth reflect and think critically about these concepts. Allowing students to reflect and role-play with their peers helps them prepare for challenging interactions and support each other by giving advice and tips on ways to improve.

Since mentors are likely to learn about serious concerns from their mentees, they are taught to notice signs of trauma, harm, and distress from their mentees; the training helps them to understand confidentiality and the importance of addressing the concerns as quickly as possible by engaging staff. Finally, the youth write a letter stating how they intend to better themselves through participation in the program. Mentors who successfully completed the training and signed a contract committing to the responsibilities of their position (one year commitment, weekly attendance, building a positive relationship with their mentee, etc.) were invited back to serve as mentors in the program.

This mentor training helps equip mentors in building strong relationships with their mentees to ensure match duration promotes positive youth development, one of the goals of S.L.I.Y. Due to the nature of the high-violence, low-income neighborhoods in which the program operates, a trauma-informed approach was utilized during training based on an understanding of the developmental impact trauma has on the youth. This strategic approach created a sense of safety and empowerment for all the youth, especially for those who have been exposed to trauma.



Snapshot #4 – Navigating School-site Logistics in the FRIENDS FIRST Program

FRIENDS FIRST believes the initial meeting with partner schools is critical to setting up the program for success. In their initial meetings with schools, they program staff meets with at least one of the schools' principals and the school liaison to facilitate an in-depth discussion about these foundational topics:

- A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) providing detailed expectations for the school and for FRIENDS FIRST staff. It outlines a basis for accountability if logistical challenges are encountered with the school).
- Identifying the right school liaison. Typically, the school principal wants to serve as the school liaison, but FRIENDS FIRST has found principals/administrators do not have the needed availability to provide the level of support the program requires. School counselors or teachers are great options to serve as liaisons, as long as they have the capacity and are bought into the program.
- Establishing program logistics early on in the partnership gives clarity to the school on their responsibility in program success. FRIENDS FIRST has found successful programs cannot thrive if expectations for the partner school are low or unattainable for them. Unfortunately, it's often better to not enter into a programmatic partnership, even when the school really wants to do so. For example, if a school decides that mentors can't be pulled out of core classes, FRIENDS FIRST can be flexible by recruiting mentors who are only available during elective classes. In the FRIENDS FIRST Pueblo programs, schools operate on a four-day school week, making it challenging to ask mentors to be excused from two class periods a week for the program. FRIENDS FIRST found a way to work around this by holding mentor meetings during the lunch hour so mentors are only missing one class period a week. However, FRIENDS FIRST has found being too flexible with school logistics can be problematic. For example, a long-standing school partner restructured its classes and asked FRIENDS FIRST to implement the program as an after-school program. FRIENDS FIRST knew this would not provide the structure or setting needed to implement the program with fidelity, so FRIENDS FIRST decided to discontinue programming at that school.
- Ensuring mentors are maintaining grades and finding support in their classes. Extend care and recognition via thank-you cards, coffee, program T-shirts, etc., to staff who support the program. Check in with teachers to ensure mentors are engaged and doing well.
- Creating relationships that gain buy-in is essential to program success. FRIENDS FIRST ensures at least one school principal signs the MOU and is fully on board with program expectations and deliverables. Additional recommendations include:
 - Developing relationships with counselors, office staff, and other teachers (since these are the people who support the day-to-day logistics of the program).
 - Engaging students and parents/guardians in advocating for the program at their schools
 - Advocating for the program to be a part of the school culture. This can be accomplished by providing the program to all classes in one grade level, working with the school to offer community service hours or school credit to mentors, attending back-to-school program information nights, and partnering with extracurricular activities already present at the school.



Snapshot #5 – The Critical Importance of Engaged Program Coordinators in Peer Mentoring Programs (Dr. Josh Berger)

An effective program coordinator is a primary factor linked to successful peer mentoring programs. Every major structural component of a program — recruitment, selection, training, matching, curriculum, evaluation, and marketing — are influenced by the coordinator’s direction.

Without a proficient trainer, peer mentors will not acquire the skills they need to be successful and this can result in programs having a neutral or even a negative impact on mentees. Traits typically associated with effective program coordinators include: flexible problem-solvers; inspiring motivators and team builders; committed and organized planners; and approachable role models.

Coordinators being approachable and organized are particularly important traits for peer mentoring programs. Student leaders must feel comfortable giving consistent match updates to their on-site coordinators and relying on them for ongoing support, feedback, and training.

Given the importance of the coordinator’s role, hiring dedicated and experienced leaders who have received proper peer mentor training is recommended. Occasionally, administrators and organizations select coordinators based on logistical convenience rather than expressed coordinator interest, and this tends to correlate with less successful programs.

Another related peer mentoring challenge involves program coordinator sustainability. Frequent changes in coordinator leadership can result in the erosion of previously well-established programs; school administrators and/or community organizations do not always know what is required to train student mentors and facilitate peer programs. Creation of an active stakeholder team is vital for a peer mentor program’s longevity to preserve institutional memory and prioritization in the school and/or community organization’s environment.

Co-coordinators can mitigate the departure of a program leader. Beyond a coordinator leaving, the co-coordinator model also helps alleviate one of the most highly rated challenges facing peer mentoring programs: not enough time for coordinators to plan, supervise, and evaluate their program in addition to other responsibilities. It is highly recommended schools, districts, and community organizations give full support to their peer mentoring programs through funding an ample number of coordinators and through scheduling that ensures consistent meeting times between coordinators and mentors, and between mentors and mentees.

For more information, see:

Berger, J. R. (2016). *The Implementation of School-Based Peer Programs: Successes, Challenges, and Solutions*. UCLA. ProQuest ID: Berger_ucla_0031D_15173. Merritt ID: ark:/13030/m5xq1swj. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/7kv3g5w2>



Snapshot #6 - Using Class Time to Prepare and Train Peer Mentors (without losing their interest over time) in the Peer Group Connection Program

In Peer Group Connection (PGC), high school (11th and 12th grade) and middle school (8th grade) peer mentors are enrolled in a daily course for credit as part of their regular school schedule. The course is taught by a team of two school-based faculty who participate in a comprehensive experiential training program led by the Center for Supportive Schools (CSS). The PGC course is designed to develop the mentoring and leadership skills of peer mentors while teaching them to provide mentoring to younger students. Peer mentors meet with their mentees (9th graders in high school; 6th graders in middle school) during weekly mentoring sessions held during the school day. Mentees participate in engaging, hands-on activities and discussions on topics such as sense of school attachment, competence in relationships, conflict resolution, motivation, and goal setting. PGC's integration into the school day provides a built-in mechanism for participation and retaining participants in contrast to extracurricular models that are vulnerable to a variety of scheduling, transportation, and commitment challenges. Because of this, PGC demonstrates greater likelihood than many other approaches of becoming institutionalized and sustained over time.

PGC peer mentors consistently demonstrate they are invested in creating caring communities in their schools generally, not just because they are enrolled in a credit-bearing course. They firmly embrace their roles in helping to develop nurturing, supportive environments for younger students. Peer mentors are committed to family engagement and service learning endeavors which inspire them to further commit to active citizenship in school and beyond. CSS consistently hears stories of the ways peer mentors stay connected with mentees beyond the course, through social media and other forms of socialization. Peer mentors support younger students in help-seeking when they need to access adults the school community to intervene when they learn about instances of bullying or other threats to younger students. Peer mentors become students' confidantes and are often the first to know when there is a critical school community incident. For over 40 years, CSS has gathered personal stories highlighting the transformational impact of their work, including those of 9th grade mentees who eventually became peer mentors when they reached the upper grades and went on to become teachers and PGC faculty advisors in their own schools."



Snapshot #7 – How an SEL-focused curriculum supports strong relationships in the Yess Classroom model

YESS Institute has determined their social-emotional learning (SEL) curriculum, Road to Success, is a crucial influence on the social and academic growth of both their mentors and mentees. Since 2001, YESS has been motivated by the vision of students becoming caring and productive members of their community; to attain this goal, YESS provides students with the tools and knowledge to prepare for achievement in a structured, adaptable, and inclusive way. Road to Success addresses social, cultural, and economic issues facing some, or all, of our students within its six interdisciplinary units, 91 individual lessons, and 250+ instructional hours. Each lesson is aligned with Colorado Grade 10 academic standards, has scaffolding options to suit the needs of a diverse range of learners, and is research-informed around the five core competencies of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). Key themes throughout the curriculum include: Personal Identity, Intersectionality, Prejudice and Discrimination, Financial Literacy, Healthy Relationship Building, and Community Building.

The curriculum is introduced and guided by a trained, adult Program Manager, but is facilitated between peer mentors, mentees, and Mentor Leaders. By working one-on-one and in small peer groups, students cultivate a community within the YESS Classroom that lends confidence and comfort to working through more sensitive and personal lessons. Peer mentors are given the opportunity to fulfill a leadership role in directing curriculum lesson discussions, assignments, and activities. Mentees develop confidence and empathy in understanding they are not alone in experiencing social challenges. Mentor and mentee pairs discover social-emotional strategies for navigating socioeconomic barriers. All mentees who demonstrate exceptional growth within the program are invited to return as mentors in subsequent years. Similarly, certain peer mentors are nominated by their fellow classmates to become Mentor Leaders, paid YESS employees who work alongside the adult Program Manager in supervising and co-facilitating the program. Mentor Leaders are critically important when updating the curriculum with relevant and culturally respectful content that represents each individual classroom. The impact of the Road to Success curriculum is supported by data. YESS program data analyzed over four years evidenced that mentees who improve in their SEL skills also improve academically; specifically, mentees who improved in 3+ SEL domains also had significantly higher GPAs (2.47 term average) and credit attainment (34.2), compared to students with smaller or no SEL improvement (1.15 GPA, 18.4 credits).



Snapshot #8 – Supporting mentor growth and stronger mentoring relationships by building mentors’ group cohesion

Sea Research Foundation’s STEM Mentoring program has found building camaraderie among cross-age peer mentors is a key component to program success. When peer mentors form genuine friendships and mutual trust with one another, they are more confident in their ability to build strong relationships with their mentees, share successes and challenges, and assist with the recruitment of additional peer mentors.

STEM Mentoring offers several opportunities to help build camaraderie among the 12- to 17-year-olds who serve as peer mentors to the program’s 6- to 10-year-old mentees. At the start of each implementation year, STEM Mentoring Program Coordinators hold information sessions for potential mentors, during which they share the program’s goals and expectations for mentors and mentees. Having former peer mentors speak during these events is a great way to recruit new peer mentors; they provide a perspective that potential mentors find relatable and valuable. Once mentors apply and are accepted into the program, they attend one or more training sessions which focus on MENTOR’s Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring, STEM Mentoring program components, icebreakers, and trust-building activities. Additionally, Program Coordinators meet with mentors before and/or after each STEM Mentoring session to make sure they are comfortable with the STEM content, to check whether they or their mentees need any extra support, and to give them a chance to share successes and challenges with one another. These activities allow for connection and support to flourish among the peer mentors.

Each year, STEM Mentoring sites that utilize peer mentors are invited to apply to attend one of the six week-long sessions of Sea Research Foundation’s summer Peer Mentor Leadership Academy (PMLA). The PMLA was created to bring together peer mentors from STEM Mentoring program sites across the country, with the objective of increasing leadership and relationship-building skills among participants to enhance their effectiveness as peer mentors. Programming during the PMLA consists of engaging morning workshops on the campus of Mitchell College in New London, Connecticut, and afternoon outings in and around the New London area. Workshop topics cover building camaraderie, developing relationship-building skills, being an effective leader, goal-setting, leading small-group discussions, being a mandatory reporter, helping mentees increase community connectedness, and supporting mentees affected by the opioid epidemic. Peer mentors participate in a coastal field study and beach clean-up event and learn how to model environmental stewardship for their mentees. Peer mentors who have attended the PMLA have reported feeling more confident in their ability to build positive relationships with mentees, help mentees work together as a team, support mentees when they face challenges, be better listeners, be better leaders, and be better mentors.



Snapshot #9 – A winning family-engagement strategy in the Boy With A Ball program

Boy With A Ball has found creating lasting impact in young people’s lives through peer mentoring initiatives requires building meaningful family engagement activities into the very center of the program. Programs that contribute to the development of a young person have a significant impact on their family context. Their family, in turn, has an ongoing, simultaneous impact on their child’s level of growth through the program. Effective family engagement strategies are a game changer that powerfully enhance the program’s impact on peer mentors and their mentees; in some cases, the impact expands into the student’s homes and neighborhoods. Boy With A Ball’s Velocity program trains and matches public high school students to be mentors to students attending a neighboring public middle school. The weekly program takes place after school on the middle school campus. The program includes quarterly “Super Saturdays” where all mentors and mentees are encouraged to invite unlimited family members to attend a three hour event filled with free food, fun games, activities and content centered on building connectedness within families, the school and even their neighborhoods. Super Saturdays includes activities like cookie decorating, casual roundtable discussions amongst mentors, mentees, and families, fun group games and lunch for everyone. Super Saturdays have event themes; all announcements and speeches are translated into Spanish. While mentors and mentees spend the afternoon engaging in outdoor activities, parents and families participate in a Q&A with Velocity staff about program; parents and families get to know one another and consider participating in Super Saturdays as volunteers.

During Super Saturdays, parents are honored as the heroes in their children’s lives and provided with information about the program they have allowed their child to participate in. Boy With A Ball’s experience is that family engagement activities like Super Saturdays are particularly helpful for families with prominent hierarchical structures including many immigrant, Latino, Asian and African-American families. Velocity takes into consideration an ecological systems theory, which helps the program understand how an immigrant parents’ lack of familiarity with U.S culture might impact their relationship with their child thus distancing the parent from their adolescent’s peer networks. The program considers family engagement strategies like “Super Saturdays” as pathways to increase familiarity and belonging within a new cultural context as well as to honor vulnerable families and their caregiver/adolescent dynamics. These strategies strengthen student mentors and mentees and their families, leading to deeper and longer lasting program impact.



Snapshot #10 – The value of ongoing training of City Year mentors

City Year facilitates experiences for both AmeriCorps members and students that are rooted in an asset-based, developmental approach and a long-held City Year value: the belief in the power of young people. Being asset-based and developmental means applying a consistently positive lens that considers each young person’s developmental journey and strengths and positions them as assets for growth and learning.

This developmental approach requires ongoing training, feedback and reflection as AmeriCorps members refine their practice and approach to working with students. Corps members participate in more than 300 hours of training and experiential learning during their service year and gain valuable, transferrable skills that help them excel in a range of professions after their year of service is over.

There are four keys to the success of City Year’s ongoing training program:

1. Each school-based team of City Year AmeriCorps members is supervised by a full-time staff member, an Impact Manager (IM), who customizes supports based on needs. Each IM applies a youth development and continuous learning approach to lead AmeriCorps members. They do so with the intention of modeling tone and practices that support a growth mindset and positive learning environment that AmeriCorps members can apply to their work with students.
2. Training experiences over a service year engage City Year AmeriCorps members across three key elements: practices with students, community engagement, and career development. Learning in each of the topics is mutually reinforced across experiences and AmeriCorps members understand the value of each training for both their ability to support student success and nurture their own professional growth.
3. At the start of the year, each AmeriCorps member participates in an “Hour One” - a start-of-year opening meeting that centers service, mindset and expectations in an effort to prepare them to support student growth and strengthen their own practice. This meeting sets the tone for the year and ensures AmeriCorps members are prepared for service as a team and individually.
4. City Year has established a series of partnerships to support AmeriCorps member training and skill development. Corps members are trained in The PEAR Institute’s Clover Model to understand students’ developmental capabilities and needs over time and how they are revisited as students grow and have new experiences. In addition, corps members acquire social-emotional skills that help them be successful team members, reflect on their service experience, and prepare them for workforce success following their service experience. City Year also collaborates with Playworks to incorporate their games and techniques to foster a practitioner mindset- one that seeks to build strong relationships with students, creates a sense of community on school teams, capitalizes on individual and group



energy and engagement, and empowers students to continuously reflect and learn. Recognizing the critical role of relationship development to any mentor-mentee connection, City Year has developed an emerging partnership with the Search Institute, which helps AmeriCorps members understand what practices are most effective in fostering developmental relationships with students.

City Year consistently revisits its approach to training and supporting AmeriCorps members and considers how each session is not only providing the corps members with the skills they need to successfully complete their service year, but also helping corps members develop as civically engaged individuals.





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Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring

RESEARCH-INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAMS WITH A SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, OR MATHEMATICS FOCUS

2018

STEM MENTORING

Supplement to the
Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring

RESEARCH-INFORMED RECOMMENDATIONS FOR
YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAMS WITH A SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY, ENGINEERING, OR MATHEMATICS FOCUS

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ABOUT MENTOR: THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP



MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States. MENTOR's mission is to close the "mentoring gap" and ensure our nation's young people have the support they need through quality mentoring relationships to succeed at home, school, and, ultimately, at work. To achieve this, MENTOR collaborates with its affiliates and works to drive the investment of time and money into high-impact mentoring programs and advance quality mentoring through the development and delivery of standards, cutting-edge research, and state-of-the-art tools.





Photo Courtesy of Northwestern/Science in Society

Readers should note that this guide serves only as a supplement to the full *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. It is intended to provide additional guidance and nuance to the items found in the full *Elements*, and references Benchmarks and Enhancements described more fully in that document.

INTRODUCTION

One of the fastest-growing areas of the mentoring movement is the use of mentors to get young people interested in, planning toward, and persisting in science-related educational and career opportunities. Much has been written in the last decade about the challenges America's students are having engaging in STEM subjects (those related to science, technology, engineering, and math*) and keeping up with their peers around the world in STEM academic performance^{1,2,3}, as well as the impact this achievement gap has on both scholarship and STEM industries in the United States. The struggles of girls and young women⁴, youth with disabilities⁵, youth of color⁶, and first generation college students to engage in and persist in STEM are also well documented, as these groups continue to remain disproportionately underrepresented in academia and the STEM workforce⁷. This is an issue that not only limits the career choices being considered by young Americans, but the dilution of the talent pipeline hurts American competitiveness in many industries. Closing these gaps in STEM engagement, performance, and representation has become an issue of national importance.

In recent years, mentoring has become a cornerstone approach—from K12 settings through higher education and early career development—to increasing American performance in STEM and addressing issues of historical underrepresentation in STEM careers. Organizations like US2020 and Million Women Mentors have made tremendous progress engaging STEM companies and employees as mentors to a generation of students. In government, the Corporation for National and Community Service has started and already expanded a STEM-specific strand of AmeriCorps designed to get more STEM professionals mentoring and teaching young students. Many traditional K12 STEM education programs have introduced or deepened a mentoring component of their services, recognizing that a few scattered activities may not be enough to overcome systemic challenges to long-term youth engagement in STEM. And the research literature is full of examples in higher education designed to support women and other underrepresented students in persisting in STEM once they arrive on campus⁸.

* Although some practitioners also include an additional "M" of medicine, for our purposes here, we are using the more common STEM acronym, although programs focused on medical sciences and careers may also benefit from the practices in this guide. Similarly, we did not examine literature related to programs that include the "A" of arts in their STEM mentoring programming, something that has gained popularity in recent years to compliment the traditional focus of STEM education.



But while the popularity of STEM mentoring has grown, the research on what makes these programs effective, either in isolation or in combination with other supports, has lagged behind. While the past decade has seen tremendous progress in identifying program practices that can potentially improve outcomes for youth in mentoring programs more generally, there hasn't been much direct research on the unique nuances and strategies that can make STEM mentoring programs work most effectively. One major review of the literature on relationship-based STEM interventions found that the research to draw from was so thin that instead of producing a set of recommended practices, the authors took note of the gaps in our understanding of STEM interventions to set a research agenda that might shed light onto best practices⁹.

BRINGING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES TO STEM MENTORING

As a leading research-to-practice organization in the youth mentoring space, MENTOR has always worked with researchers and practitioners to develop and disseminate evidence-based and practice-informed guidelines for mentoring programs. Our cornerstone publication, the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*¹⁰, now in its fourth edition, is heavily informed by research on the program practices that tend to yield safe and strong adult-youth mentoring relationships. This resource is widely considered to be the most globally applicable set of recommendations for mentoring practitioners, providing a broad set of practice recommendations across an increasingly diverse field, including STEM mentoring programs.

Despite the global applicability of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (hereafter referred to as the *Elements*), there is a growing body of research in implementation science indicating that not all interventions, even ones that are remarkably similar in services and populations served, will benefit from following the exact same practices¹¹. We certainly see this dynamic in the mentoring field, with mentoring programs serving youth across the age spectrum in diverse settings with diverse goals in mind and varying resources at their disposal. There has been a growing sense that broad standards of practice such as the *Elements* might not provide the nuanced and context-specific guidance on practices that matter for mentoring programs using alternative models, serving narrower populations of young people, or emphasizing a narrow set of prescribed outcomes (e.g., pursuing a STEM career). Thus, in the spirit of supporting

the increasingly diverse youth mentoring field, MENTOR has launched a series of “supplements” to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. The closer examination of STEM mentoring research and practices in this guide represents the first entry in this series and we hope that it can bring sharper focus to the work of STEM mentoring programs and ensure that all young people get the psychosocial and instrumental support they need to persist in STEM through the help of dedicated mentors.

Development of This Guide

This supplement was developed by the same team of researchers and technical assistance providers who developed the full fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* through generous funding provided by STEM mentoring leaders at Genentech, a member of the Roche Group, which operates several mentoring programs designed to get youth interested in STEM and persevering all the way through the undergraduate experience.

As with the full *Elements*, the recommendations in this guide are as grounded in the available research evidence as possible. To facilitate this effort, the team conducted an extensive literature review focused on identifying peer reviewed journal articles, government reports, and corporate literature detailing the structure and effectiveness of STEM mentoring programs. *See the text box on the next page for additional details about our literature search process.*

Reflections on the STEM Mentoring Literature

When looking at the results of the literature review as a whole, there are several characteristics that stand out for the research-to-practice work of this guide:

► ***The overall volume of research on STEM mentoring programs for youth is rather thin***

Very few STEM mentoring programs have been formally evaluated using any kind of experimental or quasi-experimental design. Most of the evaluations we encountered in this review either used qualitative methods to track and understand participant experiences or provided pre-post assessments of youth outcomes without utilizing a comparison or control group. None of the studies we reviewed tested variations in practices, meaning they shed little light on how STEM mentoring programs can improve services or try new approaches. And given that STEM mentoring programs often state long-term goals of helping youth matriculate through STEM higher education pathways and

LITERATURE SEARCH PROCESS

A comprehensive search of the literature was conducted to identify articles about mentoring related to the STEM fields. Both computer-based and manual search methods were used to locate studies. The computerized databases utilized were PsycINFO, ERIC, and Web of Science. The search of each computerized database included the following terms and combinations of terms:

- ▶ Youth + mentor + science
- ▶ Youth + mentor + technology
- ▶ Youth + mentor + engineering
- ▶ Youth + mentor + mathematics
- ▶ Mentor + science
- ▶ Mentor + technology
- ▶ Mentor + engineering
- ▶ Mentor + mathematics
- ▶ College student + mentor + STEM
- ▶ College student + mentor + science
- ▶ College student + mentor + technology
- ▶ College student + mentor + engineering
- ▶ College student + mentor + mathematics

These searches yielded peer-reviewed articles and program evaluation reports. Articles of prominent youth mentoring programs in STEM and literature reviews were manually searched to identify additional articles. To be considered for inclusion, articles had to address the utilization of mentoring to increase interest, skill, ability, engagement, or vocational goals in science, technology, engineering, and/or mathematics. This process resulted in 102 articles that met these criteria.

Once identified, articles were coded for participant and program characteristics. The age group of the target population of mentees (i.e., youth or adult) was coded, as well as any specific foci of the program/article (e.g., gender, underrepresented populations, disability). In addition, articles were coded for their STEM content (i.e., whether they focused on science, technology, engineering, math, or general STEM). Articles were also coded based on whether they addressed the following topics: mentor, mentee, and staff recruitment; mentor, mentee, and staff screening; mentor, mentee, and staff training; matching procedures; initiating (i.e., first meeting) procedures; monitoring of matches; support for matches; and match closure.

The 102 articles included the following breakdowns:

- ▶ **EIGHTY-TWO PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL ARTICLES;**
20 were a different kind of paper (e.g., a conference paper or program report);
- ▶ **FORTY-FIVE PROGRAM EVALUATIONS;**
57 were other types of papers (e.g., literature reviews, empirical articles that were not program evaluations);
- ▶ **FORTY-NINE ARTICLES FOCUSED ON YOUTH MENTORING (K–12):**
44 on undergraduate/graduate student focused mentoring, and 9 on STEM career/workplace mentoring.

Following this systematic search, the authors of this guide then supplemented this initial scan by manually retrieving additional articles and reports from related disciplines, such as general STEM education; concepts that influence STEM attrition, such as stereotyping and implicit bias; and group and workplace mentoring more broadly. These additional articles were critical in reinforcing and clarifying the final recommendations detailed in this guide. Including these articles, a total of 204 documents informed the content presented here.

INTRODUCTION

into STEM careers, few of the studies attempted to track youth participants through some of these distal points to see if the program changed educational trajectories in a meaningful way. Most of the outcome evaluations were centered in higher education settings, examining programs offered on campus for undergraduate students. Few studies on programs led by STEM businesses as part of creating a talent pipeline were found in our review.

► ***The diversity of STEM mentoring programs raises challenges when developing broad practice recommendations***

The research we reviewed covered everything from programs designed to get elementary and middle school students first interested in STEM activities all the way through providing undergraduate students with intensive hands-on research opportunities on a college campus. It included programs whose goals were purely around academic success and progress, as well as programs designed to shift demographic patterns in a specific STEM industry. Some were set in schools, others were housed at STEM businesses or nonprofit spaces. And each program emphasized unique relational aspects to meet very specific youth needs. All this diversity of programming and purpose made it challenging to develop recommendations that could globally apply to all STEM mentoring programs. Thus, readers should note that many of the recommendations in this guide come with caveats or clarifying statements that can help practitioners decide how critical a recommendation is to their work.

► ***More rigorous evaluation is needed***

As noted above, very few of the studies in this review examined *how* mentors supported STEM development in a rigorous way. While we found many wonderful examples of qualitative research that described what participants gained from the experience and how their mentors encouraged them, most of the studies did not compare or contrast different mentor approaches, examine variations in program practice, or explore subgroup findings to see if mentoring was more or less effective for certain types of youth. We also found few studies examining one of the most critical questions regarding STEM mentoring: the “value added” of having a *mentor* in on top of simply engaging in STEM activities in educationally focused programs. A better understanding of how mentoring relationships enhance and deepen engagement beyond just participation in STEM learning opportunities and exploration

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Please see the end of this section for more details about the programs and organizations that contributed to the development of this guide.

would help in developing practice recommendations that would facilitate those relationships.

Please see section 3, “Program Evaluation and Outcome Measurement in STEM Mentoring,” for further discussion of recommended practices for studying these types of programs.

The STEM Mentoring Working Group

In addition to our review of the literature, we also convened a working group of representatives from high-quality STEM mentoring programs around the country (see sidebar for participants), as well as researchers with expertise in career-focused mentoring. These experts were instrumental in:

- Suggesting practices that they felt were critical to their work in the STEM mentoring space.
- Confirming, clarifying, or, in some cases, rejecting suggested practices from the research literature. Their review was especially helpful on issues related to matching mentors and mentees, match support and supervision, and closure of matches.
- Reviewing and approving of the final recommendations of this guide.

This group met a total of four times to discuss best practices, review drafts of recommendations, and to share details about their work and the outcomes they track. You can read more about the practices employed by these STEM leaders throughout this guide.

USING THIS GUIDE

Readers should note that this guide serves as only a **supplement** to the full *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. It is intended to provide additional guidance and nuance to the items found in the full *Elements*, and references Benchmarks and Enhancements described more fully in that document. Here we cover only the Benchmarks and Enhancements that we felt needed additional recommendations for STEM mentoring programs. However, **STEM mentoring programs are still encouraged to implement all of the Benchmarks (and as many Enhancements as possible, when appropriate) from the entire set of Standards in the *Elements*.** Please keep the supplementary nature of this resource in mind when considering how to start or improve a STEM mentoring program.

THE GUIDE IS DIVIDED INTO THREE MAJOR SECTIONS:

1 GENERAL PROGRAM DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

This section builds on our review of the research and the guidance of our Working Group to review some of the major features and components of quality STEM mentoring programming. This section will be most useful to start-up efforts, or for STEM mentoring programs looking to refine or clarify their theory of change or the services they offer. An accompanying typology of STEM mentoring models and theories of change is also included in the Appendix.

2 STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

This section covers the six core Standards of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. Specific recommendations for STEM mentoring programs are offered around Benchmarks and Enhancements related to:

- ▶ RECRUITING
- ▶ SCREENING
- ▶ TRAINING
- ▶ MATCHING AND INITIATION
- ▶ MONITORING AND SUPPORT
- ▶ CLOSURE

3 PROGRAM EVALUATION AND OUTCOME-MEASUREMENT IN STEM MENTORING

This section offers tips for STEM mentoring practitioners on how they can strengthen their program evaluation strategies, as well as a list of common outcomes that STEM mentoring programs reported assessing based on their goals and target population of youth.

Throughout each of these sections, you will find small **case study examples** from our Working Group members of these practices in action. We hope these real-life examples help other practitioners better understand and implement innovations in their programs.

Readers are also encouraged to have a copy of the full *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* handy as they review this guide so that they can have access to the full complement of practices that MENTOR recommends they implement in their STEM mentoring work, when applicable.



ABOUT THE PROGRAMS WHOSE WORK INFORMED THIS GUIDE



At **3M**, we apply science in collaborative ways to improve lives daily. With \$32 billion in sales, our 91,000 employees connect with customers all around the world. Learn more about 3M's creative solutions to the world's problems at www.3M.com or on Twitter @3M or @3MNews.

As a science-based company that has thrived for 115 years, we understand the importance of investing in the next generation of scientists and innovators. That's why we're committed to generating interest and increasing achievement in STEM especially among underrepresented populations—and our student mentoring program is one of the ways we do this. STEP is one of four Science Encouragement Mentoring Programs that 3M created to empower employees and retirees to spark students' interest in STEM. Another opportunity, the 3M Visiting Wizards, is especially popular among 3M retirees. With a kit of science experiments in hand, the Visiting Wizards perform the magic of science in classrooms in the Twin Cities metro area. Through STEM-focused mentoring and outreach programs, 3M supports equitable education outcomes and equips the next generation of scientists with tools and experiences to support success.



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GENENTECH'S FUTURELAB INITIATIVE

In South San Francisco, more than 30 percent of students are English-language learners and 40 percent come from low-income families. And, while schools here have higher graduation rates than the state average, only one in three students goes on to attend a four-year university. Futurelab, Genentech's partnership with South San Francisco schools, aims to change this. In 2015, Genentech launched Futurelab—a hyper-local science education initiative, in deep partnership with SSFUSD, which gives all students K–12 the opportunity to get excited about science, to equip and engage them in rigorous hands-on science, and to inspire them to pursue STEM-related careers. Through Futurelab, we're focused on achieving our ultimate goal: to inspire students to reach their potential as the next generation of innovators and to engage them in a lifelong exploration of science.



GIRLS INC. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Our comprehensive approach to whole girl development equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers and grow up healthy, educated, and independent. These positive outcomes are achieved through three core elements:

PEOPLE: trained staff and volunteers who build lasting, mentoring relationships.

ENVIRONMENT: girls-only, physically and emotionally safe, where there is a sisterhood of support, high expectations, and mutual respect.

PROGRAMMING: research-based, hands-on and minds-on, age-appropriate, meeting the needs of today's girls.

Informed by girls and their families, we also advocate for legislation and policies to increase opportunities for all girls. Join us at girlsinc.org.



THE NYC SCIENCE RESEARCH MENTORING CONSORTIUM

is a group of New York City academic, research, and cultural institutions committed to providing NYC high school students from high-potential/under-resourced and underrepresented backgrounds with mentored, authentic research experiences in STEM. A key tenet of the Consortium is providing foundational coursework to these students to increase their comfort and competency when entering the lab, and ultimately result in a more successful experience for both the student and mentor.

Together, the 22+ partners of the Consortium share experiences and expertise, and identify opportunities and strategies to effectively support youth in developing science research skills and competencies. The Consortium model cultivates a community of practice that creates a social network of scientists, graduate students, educators, and like-minded peers with shared values and research endeavors. In building access in STEM academics and careers, we also provide students with college and career readiness resources and supports.





The **STEM TALENT PATHWAY** is a signature project of the SF Chamber of Commerce Education and Workforce Initiative, UniteSF. This collective impact

effort was launched in 2015 with the Mayor's Education Council and the SF Chamber of Commerce to create stronger pathways for SFUSD students into STEM careers. The STEM Talent Pathway works closely with the city My Brother and Sister's Keeper initiative to address the lack of diversity representation in STEM college and career programs and in pursuing STEM degrees and careers. The role of the SF Chamber is to increase awareness and connection with business and education leaders to expand and align investments to increase the number of mentors, internships, and scholarships along a connected pathway of support for San Francisco youth into STEM careers.



SCIENCE CLUB is an award-winning after school program that utilizes a long-term mentoring strategy to raise underserved middle school (grade 5-8) students' science

engagement, scientific skills, and support the long-term pursuit of STEM careers. The program was developed in 2008, in partnership with staff and leaders at the Boys & Girls Clubs of Chicago (BGCC) and teachers in Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Each week throughout the academic year, youth and mentors work in small groups—four youth and two mentors—on challenging, hands-on investigations at a community site (Boys & Girls Club, YMCA etc.). With key input from teachers and community site staff, youth groups are formed in an age- and aptitude-specific way.

Curricula, each lasting 7–10 weeks (90-minute meeting sessions per week), were developed collaboratively by CPS teachers and Northwestern staff to provide deeper exploration into scientific areas of strong interest to kids. These range from food science to biomedical engineering. Units are strongly grounded in authentic applications of science, and the eight scientific practices as outlined in the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS). Finally, mentor training and ongoing support are key program elements. Mentors receive ongoing professional development in the areas of pedagogy, youth engagement, science communication, cultural awareness, program design, and evaluation. In this way, Science Club trains both the scientists and science education providers of tomorrow.



SEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION (SRF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to inspire people to care for and protect our ocean planet through conservation, education, and research.

SRF operates Mystic Aquarium — one of America's premier nonprofit marine science research and education institutions, and an accredited member of the Association of Zoos & Aquariums and the Alliance of Marine Mammal Parks and Aquariums. STEM Mentoring is SRF's national group mentoring program for youth ages 6–10. The program brings together small groups of youth and mentors for fun, hands-on activities about STEM, with a particular focus on conservation.



The overall goal of **STEM MENTORING** is to positively impact the social development and academic achievement of participating youth. Through weekly

group mentoring sessions and additional STEM enrichment activities, youth are exposed to inspiring scientists, engineers, and conservationists, who represent a variety of careers and education pathways. By providing consistent, high-quality, STEM-focused mentoring experiences for youth, STEM Mentoring encourages decreased engagement in risk factor indicators, improvement of academic success indicators, and an overall increase in knowledge of and interest in STEM topics and careers. Since its inception in 2015, STEM Mentoring has engaged more than 6,000 youth and 1,500 mentors at more than 100 after-school sites across the country.

RESEARCHERS WHO INFORMED THIS GUIDE

WENDY MARCINKUS MURPHY, PHD, is an associate professor of Management at Babson College. Her research is at the intersection of careers, mentoring, and work-life issues, with particular attention to nontraditional developmental relationships and learning. She has served as the faculty adviser for the Mentoring Programs through the Center for Women’s Entrepreneurial Leadership (CWEL) at Babson. In addition, she created an e-mentoring program at Northern Illinois University to connect students to working professionals. Murphy has published her work in a range of journals, including *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *Human Resource Management*, *Gender in Management*, *Journal of Management*, and the *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, among others. Her book with Dr. Kathy Kram, *Strategic Relationships at Work: Creating Your Circle of Mentors, Sponsors, and Peers for Success in Business and Life*, bridges mentoring scholarship and practice. In 2014, she was recognized by Poets & Quants as one of the “40 Most Outstanding B-School Profs Under 40 in the World.”

JEAN RHODES, PHD, is the Frank L. Boyden Professor of Psychology and the director of the Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring at the University of Massachusetts Boston. She has devoted her career to understanding and advancing the role of intergenerational relationships in the intellectual, social, educational, and career development of youth. She has published three books, four edited volumes, and more than 100 chapters and peer-reviewed articles on topics related to positive youth development, the transition to adulthood, and mentoring. Dr. Rhodes is a Fellow in the American Psychological Association and the Society for Research and Community Action, and was a Distinguished Fellow of the William T. Grant Foundation.

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Photo courtesy of Midlands Mentoring Partnership

1 GENERAL PROGRAM DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

As noted in the Introduction, our literature review highlighted the tremendous diversity of programming that falls under the umbrella of “STEM mentoring.” The programs discussed in the literature varied considerably in terms of the ages of youth served, their program goals, the structure and activities of the mentoring relationships, and the outcomes measured to determine success.

In this section, we offer an overview of some of the common features and objectives of STEM mentoring programs across the age spectrum, from elementary and middle school all the way through the undergraduate experience (for the purposes of our literature review’s definition of “youth” we did include programs serving young adults up to the age of 24, allowing us to include undergraduate and early-career mentoring efforts, but leaving out most programs aimed at older doctoral students or internal mentoring programs for mid-level adult employees in STEM companies).

This section should be helpful to those looking to start a new STEM mentoring program or refine an existing one. To facilitate adoption of stronger STEM mentoring models, we review several **general program format and design considerations** that emerge from the literature. We also include a discussion of **program goals and activities**. These recommendations and program traits may not be applicable to all STEM mentoring programs, but they should be helpful to funders or practitioners who are interested in serving particular groups of youth or looking to better align program goals and activities.

We also provide a chart (see Appendix A) that offers a general typology of STEM mentoring programs and an overview of common STEM mentoring models, goals, mentors, settings, activities, and outcomes differentiated by the ages of the youth served roughly corresponding with elementary, middle, and high school programming, as well as undergraduate STEM mentoring at higher education institutions.

PROGRAM FORMATS

In reviewing the literature on STEM mentoring, we find that both in-person and online approaches are common. In-person mentoring, whether one-to-one or in groups, seems to be most common in programs intended to either spark initial interest in STEM for young children or in programs aimed at supporting older youth through some transition point (e.g., applying to college as a STEM major). Online models tend to be used in programs that seek to build large numbers of STEM relationships or to provide access to a wide variety of role models and perspectives. Online formats are also popular when in-person relationships are not possible due to geographic distance or other factors such as individual disability¹. Both in-person and online formats demonstrated evidence of effectiveness in our review, but these different program formats often differ in key ways related to their structure and the focus of their mentoring relationships.

In-Person STEM Mentoring

In addition to models where one mentor is paired with one mentee, there are several additional varieties of in-person mentoring found in STEM mentoring:

- ▶ One mentor to many youth (often in programs that emphasize hands-on experiments)
- ▶ Many mentors to one youth (with each mentor filling a unique role or perspective)
- ▶ (Near) peer group programs (common in undergraduate mentoring programs where masters or doctoral students mentor groups of undergraduates, as well as programs where undergraduates mentor high school students)
- ▶ Many mentors to many youth (most common in online platforms or models where a cohort of youth is placed in internships together)

Another common configuration for STEM mentoring programs is what might be called a **“layered” approach** to mentoring. In these programs the primary mentor is supported by a more senior scientist or faculty member while in turn serving a child or adolescent mentee². The most common configuration for this approach has a senior faculty member supervising/mentoring an undergraduate mentor who is in turn working with a high school or middle school student. These programs have the potential to both spark STEM interest and efficacy in younger students, while also strengthening the undergraduate experience and supporting persistence and completion of STEM majors³.

As noted above, we also encountered examples of **multi-mentor approaches** where youth get several mentors or “engaged adults” working with them at once. The most common configurations for these programs have a student mentor working in tandem with a faculty mentor (in higher education settings) or a worksite supervisor offering mentoring related to job skills while another employee mentor offers more social and emotional support around workplace culture, belonging, and “soft skills” such as networking and professionalism. The appeal of these programs is to ensure that young people get support on multiple fronts and that those with some authority or supervisory obligation over mentees are not also tasked with providing deeper social and emotional support that might conflict with their supervisory role. A good example of this type of multi-mentor approach can be found in the case study of 3M’s mentoring model (*see sidebar*).

Online STEM Mentoring

Online mentoring formats are mostly used in programs where exposing youth to a large variety and volume of STEM professionals or academics is important to the goals of the program. This approach is common, for example, in programs designed to help high school–age girls engage with a number of female scientists so that they can develop a sense of belonging in STEM and access a wider variety of scientists who could be helpful to their academic or career aspirations⁴. Online platforms allow for considerable networking within STEM fields, offer youth a wider variety of perspectives and supports, facilitate youth finding rare STEM role models who come from similar genders or backgrounds, and may offset the negative experiences that can occur when one-to-one matches do not meet participants’ satisfaction⁵. The research also suggests, however, that for some youth a closer personal relationship with one mentor may be most impactful for overcoming personal barriers to STEM participation⁶. These more intensive dyadic relationships can offer more focused and intensive support than a dispersed group of online mentors online.

For programs using an online platform, the research suggests that the **frequency of interactions** between mentor and mentee is a key factor in the success of the relationship. For programs using a group online format, the **number of mentors communicated with** by youth may also be an important metric that speaks to the amount and quality of support a young person is getting and how personally engaged they are with STEM as a whole⁷.



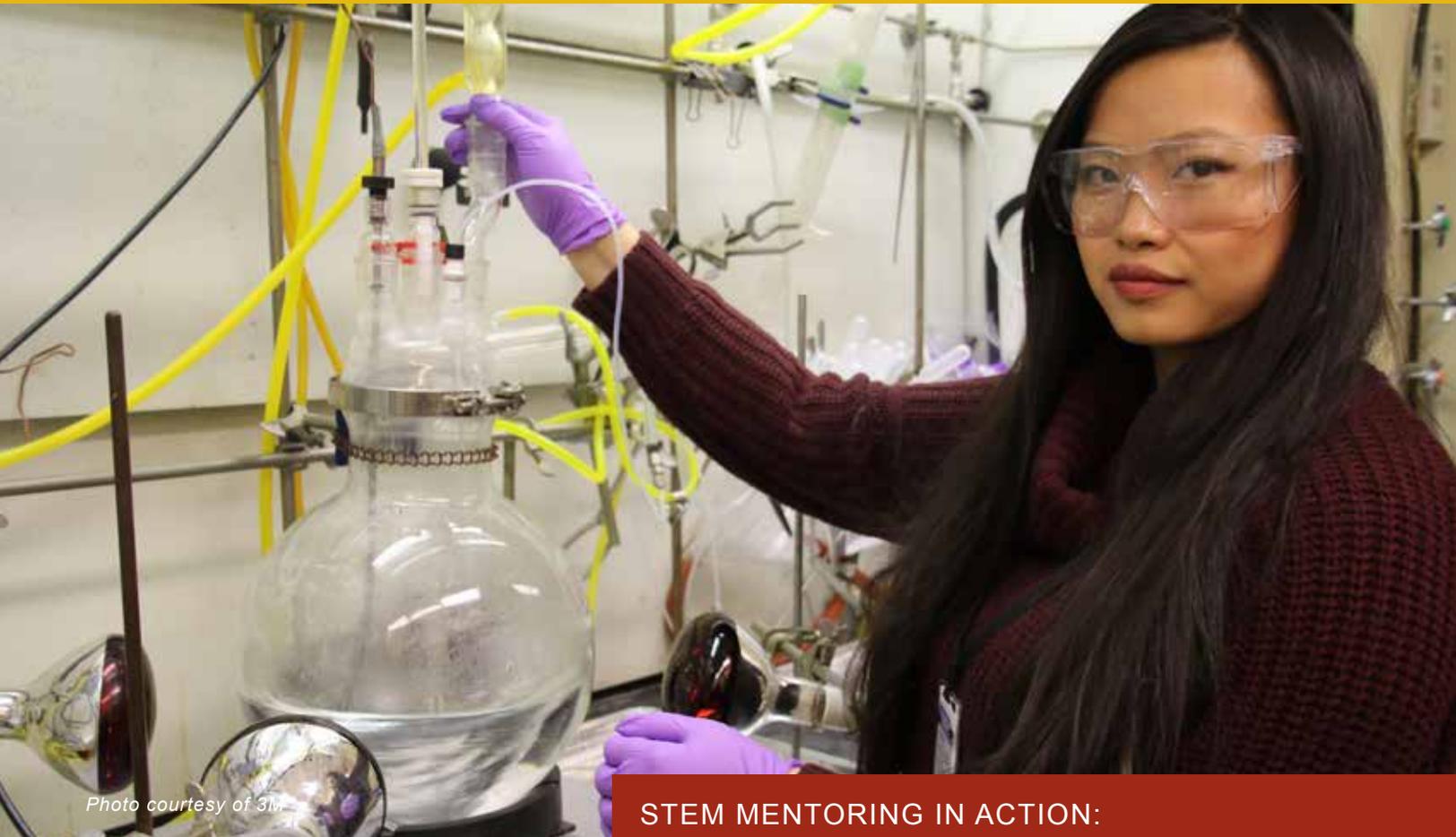


Photo courtesy of 3M

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: The Value of Multiple Mentors at 3M

THE 3M STEP (SCIENCE TRAINING ENCOURAGEMENT PROGRAM), now in its 46th year, brings high school juniors and seniors into the 3M's laboratories to learn alongside scientists. This unique experience offers students from Minnesota's Saint Paul Public School District the opportunity to develop mentoring relationships with professionals in the STEM field. And, for numerous past participants, the program offers a stepping stone into a career as a 3M corporate scientist.

Through STEP, students are matched with two mentors—a Technical Mentor and a Networking Mentor—who serve distinct yet complementary roles throughout the internship. The Technical Mentor oversees the student's lab projects and provides feedback and support as the student learns new skills and collaborates with the team. On the other hand, the Networking Mentor interacts outside the lab and focuses on helping the student navigate professional obstacles and personal challenges, as well as connecting the student with additional opportunities, professionals, and experiences. Together, the two mentors meet with the student to get to know one another and discuss the student's goals.

This team mentoring approach provides students with a rich support system and comprehensive sounding board. Mentors are intentionally paired to have different areas of expertise, offering students access to a varied network of professionals with diverse skill sets. Encouraged to reach out with personal and career-related topics, students receive multiple perspectives in return. Some students find they're comfortable approaching different mentors for different topics, while other students connect better with just one mentor. Having two mentors increases the likelihood that the student will develop a personal connection with at least one, and it also enables students to develop a more robust professional network.



Photo courtesy of Genentech

YOUTH AGE AND PROGRAM PURPOSE

As noted above, our scan of the field identified programs serving youth across the K12 spectrum and into undergraduate higher education contexts. But we also noted a shift in program purpose as youth matriculate through their education.

Programs serving youth in elementary and middle school tend to use mentoring to generate enthusiasm for STEM, show how STEM subjects apply to real world settings and issues, share more information about STEM careers and the roles scientists play in solving problems, and nurture self-identification as someone who could someday be a scientist or apply STEM skills. Because many of these programs are set in schools, they often also have an explicit goal of improving performance and grades in STEM subjects. However, we did also note a theme that many of these programs taught “soft” skills that would also be very applicable to STEM careers, such as teamwork and collaboration, organizational skills, and clear communication, in addition to more academically focused goals.

Once students move into high school and undergraduate settings, the focus of these mentoring programs tends to shift to solidifying STEM identity (rather than creating it), building practical skills, offering hands-on research or laboratory experiences, and helping youth overcome systemic barriers. These programs tend to pair mentors and youth for longer periods of time and frequently use “embedded” experiences, such as internships or a role on a research team as a way of building both practical skills and a sense of belonging in STEM work. They also frequently emphasize planning for, or direct

completion of, various transition point activities, such as applying to college as a STEM major, presenting research at an academic conference, or securing a first job at a STEM company.

There is some sentiment in the literature that creating the initial interest in spark is something that needs to happen before high school^{8,9,10}. However, we did find examples of programs that were explicitly about trying to entice high school students, especially girls and youth of color, who might have potential in STEM but who had not connected to or identified with a STEM-related future¹¹. In spite of these exceptions, most programs for younger students tend to focus on creating that STEM “spark” while those for older youth are more instrumental in nature and focused on *maintaining* STEM engagement.

There was considerable consensus in the literature, though, that neither approach was likely to be successful in the long-term without the other, that a more continuous series of mentoring opportunities might be most effective in growing the number of STEM professionals generally and closing race and gender gaps in STEM industries and academia^{12,13,14}. What seems to be most needed, yet rarely provided to youth, are STEM opportunities across their childhood into adolescence and young adulthood^{15,16}. Varied mentoring relationships (and programs) over time, each providing the right boost to engagement and self-efficacy at the right moment, may be most effective for helping youth overcome barriers to their STEM participation and persist in the face of institutional or systemic inequities.

A good example of this form of intentional “handoff” from one program to another over a student’s matriculation can be found in the profile on the next page highlighting the transitioning of mentees across Genentech’s many Futurelab STEM mentoring programs.



Photo courtesy of Genentech

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Genentech's Futurelab Initiative

FUTURELAB is a hyper-local STEM education initiative that supports all K-12 students in the South San Francisco Unified School District (SSFUSD) and provides rigorous, hands-on science. While there are a number of programs that engage South San Francisco (SSF) students and teachers, there are three signature programs that highlight a continuum of programming that engages elementary, middle, and high school students: Gene Academy, Helix Cup, and Science Garage.

Gene Academy is an elementary after-school mentoring program for SSF third- through fifth-grade students that pairs approximately 200 students with two Genentech mentors to work together on homework and hands-on science experiments for an entire academic year.

Helix Cup is an annual, semester-long science competition designed to engage all eighth-grade students—approximately 630 students—from SSF middle schools to help them develop problem solving, teamwork, and science skills with the help of more than 100 Genentech coaches who guide student teams throughout the competition.

Science Garage is a high school classroom and lab that provides a four-year, and lab-focused biotech curriculum pathway. This program gives 1,000+ high school students in the district the chance to gain lab skills and increase their awareness of careers in biotech with the help of more than 140 Genentech scientists or “teachers assistants” who go into the classroom every week during the entire academic year to support lab execution and share more about their career journeys.

This continuum of programming establishes multiple touchpoints to engage students in STEM and helps students develop multiple relationships with STEM professionals from Genentech throughout their educational journey. In a field as challenging as STEM, students are at an advantage if they have multiple supportive relationships that can help them find a STEM internship or complete STEM programs. This continuum of programming empowers students to foster a passion for STEM at an early age that they can build upon during middle school and high school, as they develop practical STEM competencies and consider careers in STEM. Based on third party evaluation, this comprehensive approach has been successful in fostering excitement about STEM, boosting confidence in doing hands-on STEM, and cultivating STEM skills.

OTHER INFLUENCES ON PROGRAM PURPOSE

In addition to age-related shifts in program purpose, there were a few other factors that tended to shape the activities and areas of emphasis for STEM mentoring programs:

Closing Demographic Gaps in STEM Fields

The majority of the STEM programs discussed in the literature had an explicit focus on helping youth from underrepresented groups engage with and persist in STEM academic and career pursuits. These groups included girls and young women, members of specific racial and ethnic groups, youth with disabilities, and youth living in poverty. Even when programs did not explicitly state that their intentions were to close these gaps, they often noted that they worked in schools or nonprofit settings that served high numbers of youth of color or low-income youth or that some special outreach was conducted to support the involvement of similar groups.

Interestingly, we found examples of programs designed to support struggling and disengaged students^{17,18,19}, as well as programs that were explicitly supporting talented and gifted students who were already deeply engaged in STEM, keeping them on an existing pathway toward an eventual STEM career^{20,21,22}. Obviously, mentors in these programs engaged in different strategies and forms of support, but this finding further highlights that mentors can be important for all types of students, regardless of their STEM abilities or current level of future STEM planning. Mentoring relationships seem to be valuable across the entire spectrum, especially when deployed in an effort to maximize the long-term engagement of groups that have traditionally struggled to show interest or persist in STEM fields.

Direct Talent Pipelines

Less frequent in the literature were examples of programs sponsored by STEM companies or industries. These programs tend to focus on engaging high school age youth, providing them with internships, summer bridge research opportunities, or other projects that would develop youth skills and potentially help identify students with high aptitude for specific STEM careers²³. While these types of programs were not referenced much in the peer-reviewed literature (reflecting a lack of emphasis on producing academic papers as an outcome of evaluating these types of programs), our Working Group of STEM practitioners certainly reflects this emphasis on nurturing the pipeline of STEM

talent with programs sponsored by organizations as varied as a teaching aquarium (Sea Research Foundation), a biotechnology company (Genentech), and a multi-industry corporation like 3M. Each of these programs serves as an example of a company or industry investing in the next generation of workers directly through mentoring.

PROGRAM GOALS AND ACTIVITIES

As noted above, the main intentions of STEM mentoring programs are largely reflective of the ages of the youth served with corresponding activities that are appropriate for their developmental stage and current level of STEM engagement. In general, when looking across all ages, we see that specific goals of STEM mentoring programs tend to cluster around three main outcomes:

► *Changing mentees' attitudes, beliefs, and plans related to STEM*

Much of the work of STEM mentoring programs focuses on **building confidence and feelings of self-efficacy** around STEM subjects. These programs are grounded in a belief that youths' desire to continue in STEM pursuits will be strengthened if they feel like they have *the ability* to do well in STEM subjects. In addition to building confidence, these programs also tend to build a **sense of belonging** and **"STEM identity,"** in which youth feel like a STEM class or career is a place that fits who they are and where they are welcomed and encouraged²⁴. We found support in the literature for programs that help develop feelings of "self as scientist," in which mentored youth are able to not only see their future self in a STEM career or role but feel that engaging in STEM is an essential part of who they are as a person²⁵. Helping youth see themselves in this light is particularly important in programs serving groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields who may need the extra support and personal connection with mentors to truly embrace STEM in this deep way. For a good example of a program that emphasizes making students feel welcome in the "culture of science" see the case study on the work of the New York City Science Research Mentoring Consortium later in this section.

Lastly, we find that STEM mentoring programs often take these mentee gains in confidence and belonging and leverage that change in service of **increased planning to participate or continue** in STEM classes, applying to college as a STEM

major, or transitioning into graduate school or a STEM career. While helping youth feel at home in the world of STEM is valuable, it means little if they don't actually follow through on practical steps along the pathway toward a STEM career. Thus, many programs provide instrumental supports (e.g., help with college access²⁶ or internships to gain job experience) that make those gains in confidence and belonging actionable.

► *Increased participation in STEM*

In addition to changes in attitudes and plans, another set of goals is focused on measurable **increases in engagement and participation** in STEM activities²⁷. This can be measured in terms of taking more STEM classes, consuming more STEM-related media, engaging in additional STEM opportunities outside the program, and enrolling in higher education as a STEM major. Many STEM mentoring programs view themselves as a “gateway” to a world of other STEM opportunities, often providing that first initial spark or hint of success that helps a mentee connect to STEM subjects or see STEM careers in a new light. Mentors in these programs encourage their mentees to engage more in STEM activities, including at home and with parents and siblings who can be instrumental in facilitating additional learning.

► *Increased STEM knowledge, skills, and achievement*

These are common goals for programs working in educational settings, where the involvement of STEM mentors is intended to produce **improvements in mentees' STEM test scores, grades, and other markers of academic achievement**. While these goals are hoped for across the age spectrum, they are most common in programs for older students that offer hands-on research opportunities, longer-term projects, and embedded experiences in STEM settings. These programs tend to emphasize “mastery skills” that allow mentees to take the next steps in their STEM education or careers and apply what they have learned to real-world projects and tasks²⁸.

Many of the programs described in the literature combine all three by getting youth engaged in STEM mentoring activities and conversations with their mentor that, in turn, build confidence and feelings of belonging in STEM, which further translates into increased knowledge and attainment in STEM. Northwestern's Science Club program is one such example (reference; see vignette on p.71).

It is worth noting that most STEM mentoring programs address more than one of these goal areas. Many of the programs described in the literature combine all three by getting youth engaged in STEM mentoring activities and conversations with their mentor that, in turn, build confidence and feelings of belonging in STEM, which further translates into increased knowledge and attainment in STEM. Mentors in these programs, however, may be tasked with a role related to only one of these goal areas. For example, a program may choose to have volunteer mentors talk with youth about overcoming racial, gender, or other systemic barriers to a STEM career, while program staff or other professionals lead tutoring or other instructional time designed to increase STEM skills and knowledge. Alternatively, mentors may be focused on direct teaching of STEM skills and processes for doing research, while others address the more relational or social-emotional aspects of engaging in STEM. Programs should think carefully about what roles mentors need to fill and if there is a need to have a wider range of caring adults step in to address barriers to youths' STEM engagement.

In addition to these broad goals, it's worth noting that many programs, particularly those trying to get traditionally underrepresented groups engaged in STEM, also provided **additional tutoring or hands-on instruction**, along with mentoring, as part of their services^{29,30}. These programs rightly recognize that it is unrealistic to expect mentees to become more engaged with STEM or to see themselves in a STEM career if they are struggling in the classroom or are behind their peers in STEM knowledge. Thus, one strategy of many programs is to help youth “catch up” to their peers in order to lay the foundation for the growth in confidence and burgeoning STEM identity that follows.

There is no “right” configuration of activities for STEM mentoring programs, but each program should have a theory of change that explains which of these goals are important to them and how mentors and others work together to address these three broad program goals.

Program Activities for Older Mentees

For older mentees, particularly high school-aged students who have already expressed an interest or aptitude in STEM, one of the more prominent activities was participating in **direct research experiences**, often as part of a **summer bridge program**. These types of summer programs offer a chance for mentees to work directly alongside more experienced scientists and build their



STEM MENTORING IN ACTION:

New York City Science Research Mentoring Consortium

Programs within the **NEW YORK CITY SCIENCE RESEARCH MENTORING CONSORTIUM** are committed to immersing mentees into the culture of science. As with many fields, scientists have a unique set of norms that influence how professionals generally approach teamwork and collaboration, literature and language, and work in laboratories. Consortium mentors strive to bring mentees into that culture so they can better understand how science operates and are empowered to develop their own identity within the science community.

Mentors expose mentees to various aspects of science culture by inviting them to meetings and events within the science community. Mentees often attend their lab's meetings, where the principal investigator, other researchers, and students in the lab provide updates on their research. Some labs ask mentees to present their own work or discuss a challenge and receive feedback from the team; this provides mentees with experience communicating about their research and offers them insight into how their work fits into the team's overarching goals. Science is rarely done in isolation—something that is often surprising to high school researchers—and learning to collaborate with others within the science community is critical.

Mentors might also invite mentees to attend presentations by visiting researchers, where they can learn what types of questions people ask regarding a researcher's methods and results, or to journal clubs, where mentees can acclimate to the language used in scientific literature. Mentees often don't have STEM role models before participating in a Consortium program, so this experience exposes mentees to different types of scientists and enables them to build a professional network that can help connect them with science opportunities later on. They are also exposed to professional behavior and learn the often unspoken expectations of how to interact with professionals at many levels.

Mentees who integrate into the culture of science are able to foster an identity as part of the science community and develop skills that equip them to succeed and persist in the field. Some mentees participating in a Consortium program get published, while others get additional research placements based on skills they've developed. Because mentees have been active in science experiences, they can see themselves belonging to the science community.

research skills, while also maintaining and deepening engagement in STEM during the summer months when youth may lose interest. Longer direct research experiences during the school year were also offered via internships, often at STEM companies or in collaboration with a local college or university. These types of activities can help youth get a sense of truly being part of the “STEM world” and can build or reinforce a sense of STEM identity. When possible, STEM mentoring for older youth provides opportunities to experience a tangible feeling of what it would be like to be in a STEM career or environment.

But this type of real-world experience can come with challenges. One of the key considerations in bringing older mentees to laboratories, workplaces, and universities is that youth may need some **coaching and training around behavioral expectations** and professionalism in these environments³¹. Several of the programs in our literature review noted challenges around helping mentees understand rules of workplace behavior, which ranged from participating in meetings, staying on task, and communicating effectively with other employees or team members, to more procedural topics such as laboratory safety or rules around use of equipment. These are the subtle nuances of professionalism and exposing youth to these concepts in a supportive mentoring context can serve them well in any professional setting down the line. *See the “Training” section for more details on how programs can address this consideration.*

Programs serving older mentees, particularly those who already have solid STEM engagement, often directed mentors or other adults to provide **practical information about the college application process**. In one study, youth in the program (and their parents) made substantial gains in knowledge about the application process and next steps, even though the program had spent limited time on the topic³². This suggests that combining STEM engagement activities with college access services might be a potent combination for ensuring that more youth enter higher education as STEM majors. The “Training” section of this supplement offers more guidance on preparing mentors to support college attendance work.

Program Activities for Younger Mentees

Programs serving mentees in grades K–8 often focus on hands-on STEM activities that generate enthusiasm and excitement, facilitate teamwork or peer sharing, and allow students to learn and apply science or math concepts. These activities are often mentor-led, with a STEM professional or

older student assisting mentees in conducting an experiment or a completing a STEM project.

When selecting specific activities for youth and mentors to engage in, programs working to spark youths’ initial interest in STEM may prioritize activities or experiments that support an **inquiry-based approach**, designed to get students thinking about the scientific process, reasons behind results, and lessons learned from how they approached the challenge or question at the heart of the activity³³. These types of activities emphasize asking questions, explaining results, and thinking about practical implications regardless of the result of the activity. They are less focused on finding a “right” answer, which can discourage mentees who are struggling with the content, instead focusing on the problem-solving and creative thinking aspects of science.

Programs working with elementary and middle school youth also frequently emphasize **fun activities** that are not directly related to STEM learning or content, but are instead intended to build rapport, trust, and connectedness between mentors and mentees. We did find some examples across our literature review of programs for older youth that stressed relationship-focused activities³⁴, even into college-age programs³⁵, but generally, programs serving older youth focus much more on skill-building and work toward goals, while programs for younger students offered a more even blend of STEM-learning and relationship-developing activities.

It is worth noting that one of the key challenges for STEM mentoring programs—one that was suggested in the research reviewed for this guide³⁶ and reflected in the experiences of our Working Group members—is ensuring that program activities aren’t so task-focused that the relationship at the heart of all good mentoring is neglected. **Because STEM mentoring programs can rely so heavily on hands-on activities and completion of research tasks and academic skill building exercises, the relationship itself may not receive the attention it deserves.** Programs may struggle to offer mentors and mentees the time they need to get to know each other, to talk about things other than STEM, and to share a good laugh or connect in ways that will make their STEM work more authentic and meaningful. If there is one core recommendation at the heart of this guide, it is that STEM mentoring programs should embrace and facilitate true mentoring by implementing and adhering to practices that ensure the expected frequency and duration of mentoring interactions and foster the development of a real mentoring relationship that goes beyond doing experiments and cool projects together.

OTHER KEY PRACTICES IN IMPLEMENTING STEM MENTORING

There were several other aspects of STEM mentoring program design and implementation that were noted in the research reviewed:

- ▶ Many STEM mentoring programs, particularly those serving the younger grades, offered some form of **parent and family engagement**. This commonly took the form of activities that mentees could take home and do with their parents or siblings. Programs serving older youth often engaged parents in college access supports³⁷. Those that involved a longer-term research project often engaged parents in some kind of presentation or capstone event at the end of the program where they could see the STEM work their child and mentor had engaged in. See the Training and Closure sections for more information on how parents and families can be brought into the work of STEM mentoring programs. (And for a good example of STEM parent engagement in action, see the sidebar on Sea Research Foundation’s end-of-year events.)
- ▶ **Transportation challenges** were noted in studies of programs in our literature review³⁸—and confirmed by our practitioner Working Group. We found examples of this impacting both rural and urban programs. Getting youth out to STEM businesses or off-site locations to participate in STEM activities can be challenging. Frequently, these programs were located at mentees’ schools or other easy-to-get-to locations, rather than asking mentees and families to travel to a company or university. Having the school as a central location to host the STEM program can alleviate transportation and resource concerns. But there can also be challenges in bringing mentors to the school site, especially when trying to get STEM employees or college students who might have different schedules to the same location at once. Programs may find it easier to arrange transportation themselves, if possible, in an effort to increase participation.
- ▶ Regardless of how mentors and mentees get to their meetings, STEM mentoring programs can also face challenges in **securing appropriate meeting spaces** for matches to conduct hands-on STEM activities. Finding space to do mentoring activities in schools can often be a challenge, but it is especially important for STEM mentoring where mentors and youth often need larger or open spaces where they can conduct experiments or do other hands-on STEM projects. This issue can be most acute in programs where a nonprofit or university-based coordinating agency is bringing mentors to meet with students at their school or in another physical space the program does not manage. Some physical space limitations can be mitigated by proactively selecting activities that match what the school can realistically offer during the design and planning stages (e.g., avoiding selecting an experiment that requires ventilation for smoke for a school setting where matches are meeting in small, unventilated rooms).
- ▶ Finally, one common practice in programs utilizing a structured curriculum to guide mentoring activities is to **review and refine the curriculum annually based upon mentor and mentee feedback**. This practice ensures that activities that don’t quite work as expected are improved or replaced with something better and that training for mentors can be adjusted or reworked to give next year’s mentors and mentees a stronger experience.

Additional considerations for program design and implementation are covered in the following section 2, “Standards of Practice for STEM Mentoring Programs.”



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Photo courtesy of Sea Research Foundation

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Sea Research Foundation

SEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION'S STEM MENTORING PROGRAM has found that family engagement is a key component to program success. For example, when families have opportunities to access and understand the program, they're able to discover its value and are less likely to pick up their children early or skip a day of programming.

STEM Mentoring has developed several opportunities to engage families throughout the program's duration. Each site is asked to hold an information session for participating youth, families, and mentors to kick off the program, during which sites share program goals and expectations for mentees and mentors. Additionally, each STEM Mentoring module includes a multitude of resources for youth to share with family members at home, including websites, games, online videos, and printed books on STEM topics. The resources are age-appropriate, relevant, and fun, so mentees are more likely to be excited and share them with siblings and parents/guardians.

Families are also invited to participate in select STEM enrichment activities during the program year as well as the graduation event at the end of the year, where mentees share what they learned during the program. Mentees are encouraged to present their work in their native language if English is the second language at home. These events are sometimes the first time that families are able to see first-hand what mentees and mentors have been working on together, and families are often amazed at the new skills mentees have acquired.



2

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS



RECRUITMENT

MENTOR RECRUITMENT

Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program. (B.1.3)

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

Recruit volunteers with scientific backgrounds or current employment in a STEM field to serve as mentors, particularly if mentors will be teaching STEM content, leading complicated STEM activities, or serving as role models to mentees who are members of a group (e.g., African-Americans, women) that is underrepresented among students majoring in a STEM field or among employees in a STEM job.

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

Recruit mentors who express interest in developing a supportive, caring relationship and friendship with their mentee(s), and not just promoting their mentees' interest in, or commitment to, a STEM career.

MENTEE AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN RECRUITMENT

Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program. (B.1.7)

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

Program engages in recruitment strategies directed at potential mentees that show people who are working in STEM careers as part of a collaborative community of talented, interesting people.

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

Program engages in recruitment strategies showing people working in STEM who are concerned with helping people or applying their work to improving the world.

Justification

The recruitment process provides the first contact that a volunteer mentor, mentee, or parent or guardian of a mentee may have with a STEM mentoring program. This means that, as in any mentoring program, recruitment can contribute to setting the stage for a sustainable and high quality mentoring relationship through communicating clear expectations; reinforcing motivations; and generating excitement, enthusiasm, and commitment for entering into a mentoring relationship.

Aligning Recruitment with the Stage of Mentees' STEM Engagement and Interest

As noted in the Introduction, when our literature search did find empirical studies on STEM mentoring, they were often designed for undergraduate students (and occasionally graduate students who were being encouraged to enter or remain in a STEM major). In fact, many colleges are so aware of the national STEM workforce problems that they have developed well-articulated,

comprehensive plans for recruiting and retaining students into STEM majors^{1,2}.

Although this literature focuses, for the most part, on undergraduate students, it remains relevant for our recommendations to those serving K–12 students with STEM mentoring for several reasons. The plans are carefully thought out and include a range of different models of mentoring programs that can be applied to K–12 or college summer bridge programs. In addition, they typically have goals and strategies that are designed to further students' STEM involvement or engagement, which has implications for our recruitment recommendations here.

For example, recruitment strategies for a K–12 STEM mentoring program might consider the following broad target audiences, based upon the program's goals.

► **Recruitment into STEM**

When a program is focused on initially engaging mentees in a STEM field, then a diverse set of mentors—who may or may not be teaching or working in a STEM field—may be recruited. In other words, mentor expertise or knowledge around STEM subjects is less important to program success than a general interest in STEM. Furthermore, mentee recruitment may also be more broadly defined. By “casting the net widely,” mentoring programs focusing on STEM recruitment might capture the interest of students who might not have had previous experiences in STEM that were exciting, fun, engaging, creative, or stimulating.

► **Retention in STEM**

In contrast, mentoring programs aimed at *retention* of mentees in a STEM major or career path tend to have program recruitment goals, target populations, and program activities that are more intense and focused than more entry-level programs. Mentors recruited into STEM retention programs tend to be people who are currently working in or retired from a STEM field, who have the education and expertise to direct activities that may be complicated and require having technical skills. In addition, STEM professionals can contribute to supporting STEM retention efforts through being a role model or providing information and connections. Mentees recruited into a STEM retention program may be enrolled in a STEM major or STEM courses, or engaged in extracurricular STEM activities.

These broad goals clearly will influence the target populations of mentors and mentees for a STEM mentoring program. In addition, the mentees’ stage of involvement in STEM will also influence when, where, and how to recruit mentors and mentees, and what messages to include in recruitment activities and materials. These issues are discussed below.

MENTOR RECRUITMENT

Some STEM mentoring programs operate at somewhat of an advantage with regard to recruitment of mentors because they are located within a workplace or educational setting where they have a readily accessible audience of prospective mentors. In addition, mentors in these settings may receive some form of compensation or incentive (e.g., course credit, release time) for participating in the mentoring program. Despite these

advantages, STEM mentoring programs, including members of our Working Group, still report challenges with mentor recruitment and match retention.

Unfortunately, the empirical literature on STEM mentoring provides little direct guidance regarding effective recruitment practices. In fact, participant recruitment *locations* are frequently mentioned in studies or reports of STEM programs (e.g., flyers in the lunchroom, announcements at faculty meetings), whereas the *content* of recruitment messages or strategies is usually missing from program descriptions. The messaging used during the recruitment process is equally, if not more, important than the locations for conducting recruitment. This topic is an important direction for future research.

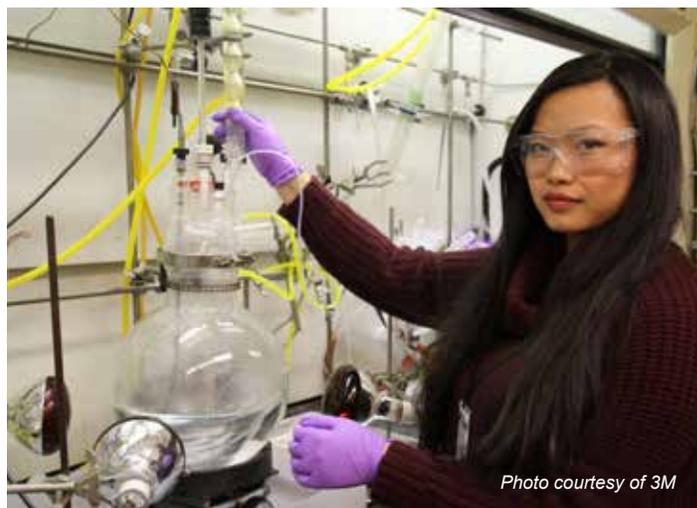


Photo courtesy of 3M

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: 3M

With its commitment to apply science to improve lives around the world, 3M has fostered a strong culture of service and community engagement. STEP recruits 3M volunteer mentors by promoting the opportunity at internal events—including networking events, technical forums, and outreach events—as well as through communication channels such as 3M’s LinkedIn community, newsletters, the employee intranet, and digital monitors on display throughout corporate headquarters in St. Paul. Some of STEP’s most enthusiastic mentors are those who participated in the program back in high school and work at 3M today. You can find information about 3M’s mentoring programs in the Introduction.

Characteristics of Mentors Recruited for STEM Mentoring Programs

Benchmark.1.3 states that mentoring programs should recruit mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program. There are two major recommendations related to this benchmark.

1 RECRUITMENT OF MENTORS WITH STEM EDUCATION OR WHO ARE EMPLOYED IN A STEM FIELD

Our first recommendation is to recruit volunteers for the program who have **scientific backgrounds or current employment** in a STEM field to serve as mentors. This recommendation is considered to be particularly relevant if mentors will be teaching STEM content in the program or leading complicated STEM activities. See the sidebar for one example of how a leading company encourages their employees to get involved in their STEM mentoring work with youth through a variety of channels.

The recruitment of mentors of this type has several factors for programs to consider:

Technical Skills Needed to Mentor in the Program

The types of *technical skills* that may be needed to be a mentor in a STEM mentoring program will depend on the *goals* of the program.

► *Initial engagement goals*

STEM mentoring programs that have the goal of interesting K–12 students in STEM may be less focused on the need for advising and connecting, and may hope to instill a spark of interest or curiosity about STEM in mentees. At this stage of development, activities may be designed to be fun and engaging, and less related to professional STEM work activities. To serve as a mentor in this type of program, at a minimum, mentors need to be interested in STEM.

► *Retention goals*

Sustaining an interest in STEM requires mentoring that may initially focus on helping mentees to acquire knowledge of a STEM field to, ultimately, supporting mentees attempts to create new knowledge in the field. To support these more advanced efforts, programs should recruit mentors who have substantive knowledge and expertise of the discipline. In the case of STEM mentoring, recruiting mentors with scientific

backgrounds or current employment in a STEM field is also grounded in social learning theory principles. When students have repeated exposure to STEM professionals who are not just a group instructor or facilitator, and develop a more personal helping relationship with a mentor, they can observe and learn how to enter and navigate STEM careers. Although theoretically, mentors in a STEM profession should add to the magnitude of the impact of a STEM mentoring program on youth, we were unable to locate any studies that actually tested this hypothesis.

Influence of Activity Features on Mentor Qualifications

The types of technical skills that may be needed to be a mentor in a STEM mentoring program will also depend upon the *activities* included in the program.

► *Program complexity*

If matches complete STEM activities together, it may be helpful if mentors have some level of education or employment in a STEM field. The depth of knowledge and experience will depend on the complexity of the STEM projects being done and the presence of other instructors or advisers who can assist with instructions and monitoring progress.

► *Level of technical knowledge*

Often there are sophisticated technical skills that need to be learned and mastered to conduct STEM projects or research in mentoring programs aimed at deepening an interest in STEM³.

► *Safety considerations*

Having a background in the STEM field can be useful for practical and safety reasons in that mentors who are familiar with the procedures for conducting a STEM activity can focus their energies on their mentoring relationship and mentee(s) rather than the logistics and instructions for completing the activities.



STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Girls Inc.

THE GIRLS INC. EUREKA! PROGRAM provides STEM education to underserved girls and young women by facilitating hands-on STEM experiences and professional and personal development activities in a college campus environment. Girls Inc. is intentional about recruiting women as mentors so that mentees have positive and successful female role models in a field disproportionately represented by men. Girls Inc. has found that when girls gain exposure to successful women in STEM, they're able to envision themselves in a field where they may have previously felt they didn't belong. As Calista, a third-year participant in the Eureka! program at Girls Inc. of Worcester, Massachusetts, said:

"During my time at UMASS, I met amazing women in the field of medicine. (My mentor) helped me to see that even in a male-dominated industry, women can succeed . . . Before this program, I didn't really know what I wanted to study in college or become when I finished my degrees. Now, I see that there are many opportunities for women in STEM."

Girls Inc. recruits women from STEM professions by tapping into groups, communities, and companies that align with Girls Inc.'s mission and model, including local STEM companies and women's interest groups. Girls Inc.'s local chapters have developed partnerships with the Society of Women Engineers and The Links, Incorporated—a nonprofit comprised of 15,000 professional women of color—to recruit mentors and develop the next generation of STEM professionals.

These partners, along with women's interest groups embedded in local STEM companies, have been great sources to recruit diverse mentors, many of whom are from underrepresented populations in their professions and can relate to navigating through adversity in the workplace. Mentors can shine as examples of women who have survived and thrived in STEM, and they can also communicate with mentees about the challenges they experienced—from being left out of study groups to not feeling heard in meetings—and support girls as they encounter the same obstacles.

Workplace Incentives for Being a STEM Mentor► *Incentives for professionals who work in STEM jobs*

Sometimes mentors have been incentivized to volunteer to participate in a mentoring program through release time at work or even direct funding to hire students to work in their labs⁴.

► *Incentives for college faculty mentors*

These incentives can be instrumental, particularly at the college level, because the workload of STEM faculty members is heavy and has been growing over time⁵. Furthermore, promotion and tenure decisions are primarily based upon reviews by peers from other institutions concerning research quality and productivity, and they are often unfamiliar and uninvolved in the faculty member's mentoring of undergraduate students or volunteering to mentor K–12 students.

Recruitment of STEM Professionals Who Are Also Members of an Underrepresented Group

Some mentoring programs—particularly those who focus their mentee recruitment efforts on students from groups that are underrepresented in STEM—carefully target mentors who are similar demographically to their mentees. In other words, they recruit mentors who both work in a STEM profession and who themselves are members of a group underrepresented in STEM, such as women, members of specific racial or ethnic groups, or those with disabilities. For a real-life example of a program that specifically targets female STEM professionals in this way, see the previous page on the recruitment strategies of Girls Inc.

The roots of this decision come from an understanding of the definition of mentoring and forms of support that mentoring programs hope that their mentors will provide to mentees. In STEM mentoring, three common roles of effective mentors include being a trusted adult friend, a nurturer of possibilities, and a positive role model⁶—and each role can be operationalized in terms of meeting program goals.

Being a trusted adult friend might mean providing emotional support, acceptance, and coaching regarding coping with educational or career-related challenges. Being a nurturer of possibilities in this context might mean increasing mentee's knowledge of and exposure to STEM-related professionals, experiences, institutions, and educational or career opportunities.

Being a positive role model might be passively observed in a STEM-related educational pathway or job position that mentees can emulate, or behaving intentionally in prosocial, healthy ways related to STEM education or work that mentees can imitate.

It has been hypothesized that when mentees and their mentors share being a member of a group underrepresented in STEM, these roles may be enhanced in several ways. For example,

- Observing how senior professionals handle complex situations at work⁷. For example, female STEM mentors can help female mentees cope with different work situations that may be prejudicial or discriminatory.
- Psychological identification with a same-race senior mentor can provide an example of academic success⁸.
- Identification is also important for retention and successful performance. By identifying with someone who is successful in a field and similar in important ways to oneself, it can help reduce negative stereotypes about one's group's abilities. An example of a negative stereotype is that women are less capable than men in STEM. When someone is both a member of the stereotyped group and aware of the stereotype, it can result in anxiety and underperformance in testing situations (which is referred to as stereotype threat)^{9,10,11}. In turn, awareness of negative stereotypes and low performance can result in a feeling of not belonging.

With few women in male-dominated fields to serve as role models, fields such as physics are vulnerable to women being impacted by negative stereotypes. In fact, one study found that awareness of stereotypes about women having inferior ability in physics was related to a lower sense of belonging and worse academic performance in a college physics class for women, but not men¹². This study demonstrates how negative stereotypes effect a sense of belonging and these attitudes can be a significant barrier to women entering STEM.

In another study of high school students enrolled in a STEM summer camp program, analyses were conducted that divided students into one of five groups¹³. Group membership was based on students' ratings at the beginning and end of the program of how important they thought it was to have a mentor that shared their ethnicity, gender, and social class background, and how much contact they had previously had with mentors who shared their background. Group

membership was related to outcomes of science self-efficacy, identity as a science student, and commitment to pursue a science career. Notably, students in the stably high group (i.e., those who consistently reported receiving high levels of mentoring from mentors who shared their backgrounds and thought that sharing a background was important) reported increases in efficacy, identity, and commitment as a science student.

Other groups in this study also reported increases in one or more aspects of their scientific identity. For example, students who had stable contact with mentors over time, but decreased in their reports of the importance of background similarity to mentors increased in their science self-efficacy. The findings from this study were interpreted in terms of the positive future self and identity theories^{14,15}. Consistent with these theories, by observing and having a close relationship with successful STEM professionals from similar backgrounds, students were able to envision themselves working successfully and competently in a similar career in the future.

Thus, by being able to identify with someone like yourself in a STEM career, it can build a sense of belonging and commitment to a STEM field.

Recruitment of Guest Visitors or Presenters

In addition to having mentors (who may not be in a STEM field), some STEM mentoring programs also recruit additional STEM experts to visit as guests or presenters¹⁶. Having these guests can expand mentees' professional networks and give mentees the opportunity to meet people who are working in a STEM profession, even if they aren't able to develop close, mentoring relationships with them. Because the free time of STEM professionals is often so limited, this approach can be a quick and easy way to initially get them involved in the program and perhaps ease them into an eventual full mentor role.

Recruitment of Near-Peer Mentors in STEM Mentoring Programs

Because there may not be a sufficient number of adult expert STEM mentors in geographic proximity to a mentoring program, some have explored models utilizing other types of mentors¹⁷. The engagement of peer leaders (sometimes called ambassadors) or near-peer mentors has been frequently reported as a potential structural solution to solving mentor scarcity and mentee retention^{18,19} problems.

Notably, recent research suggests that student engagement is enhanced by peer mentoring^{20,21}. Near-peer mentoring still utilizes a hierarchical approach²², but mentors and mentees are matched together based upon similarities in age, experience, rank, and/or power²³. Relationships with successful near-peer mentors help to create a welcoming environment where younger students can begin to envision themselves working in a STEM major or career. In addition, near-peer mentoring can be very efficient in that mentors can be trained to provide mentees with more regular and ongoing instrumental and psychosocial support than many employees, graduate students, or faculty members can provide.

Recruitment of near-peer mentors has been found to be effective in some studies of STEM mentoring programs delivered to students from groups that are underrepresented in STEM careers and near-peer mentoring programs have been implemented at many universities²⁴. In several small studies, upper-level undergraduate students were recruited to serve as STEM mentors to high school students²⁵ or first- or second-year undergraduate students^{26,27} with positive and complimentary effects on both the mentors and mentees. In another small, near-peer STEM mentoring program involving middle and high school mentees and undergraduate mentors from under-resourced communities and schools, mentors reported a wide range of personal and professional benefits, while mentees increased in their interest and engagement in STEM²⁸. In another study, middle school students positively rated after-school STEM activities led by high school and graduate student mentor volunteers indicating a high level of engagement and strong interest in science after participation²⁹.

The fact that near-peer mentors, who are often upper-level undergraduate students from underrepresented groups, benefit from mentoring is an added advantage of this model, because these near-peer mentor students are also at high risk of dropping out of STEM majors and being a mentor may increase their retention in a STEM field. The recruitment of near-peer mentors should be implemented with caution due to findings that matches with college-aged mentors have been reported to be at increased risk for premature closure compared to matches involving older mentors^{30,31}.



2 VOLUNTEERS NEED TO BE INTERESTED IN RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN ADDITION TO HAVING AN INTEREST IN STEM

The second recommendation related to **Benchmark 1.3** is to recruit mentors who are interested in developing a supportive, caring relationship and friendship with their mentee(s), and not just enhancing or sustaining their mentees' interest in a STEM career.

Mentors in STEM programs are motivated to volunteer for many reasons³² in addition to typical motivations for being a mentor. They may be:

- ▶ Passionate about sharing their research and/or their discipline;
- ▶ Committed to STEM education across all ages;
- ▶ Committed to developing the scientific competencies of students;
- ▶ Cognizant of the shortage of underrepresented groups in their STEM field; and
- ▶ Excited about sparking an interest in their STEM field in young people.

However, these motivations alone might not result in an authentic mentoring experience for young people. It is important to recruit mentors who are also interested in being a special type of adult to a young person, one who does more than just hang out for some activities. Recruitment messages need to include an appeal to potential mentors who are interested in developing a close, supportive, helping relationship with a mentee. This means that mentors are not only willing to be a strong role model and provide mentees with instrumental or informational support, and access to resources, people, experiences, and events related to STEM, but they should also be enthusiastic about developing a friendship that runs deeper than simply doing the program activities. Being a trusted adult friend includes things such as providing emotional support; discussing hurdles and ways of coping with challenges along the pathway to a STEM career; and the importance of being trustworthy, empathetic, and authentic with mentees. Not every STEM professional or major will want to build that depth of relationship with a mentee, but it's worth noting that almost all successful mentoring hinges on some meaningful level of mutuality, trust, and personal connection.

Thus, it is important to recruit mentors who are not just externally incentivized to participate or interested in sharing their field with mentee(s), but also motivated to establish that helpful, supporting, caring relationship and friendship with their mentee(s).

MENTEE AND PARENT OR GUARDIAN RECRUITMENT

Similar to the literature on mentor recruitment, descriptions of mentee recruitment tend to focus on defining the target population of mentees and *location* of recruitment activities, with little said about the content of recruitment messages.

Despite the fact that we have little to no direct research on the content of mentee recruitment messages, we can draw on findings from a broader body of literature on the factors that attract youth to STEM fields for making recommendations to STEM mentoring programs. We can also draw inferences from research findings on the reasons why students, and even STEM professionals, *leave* a STEM major or career. Luckily, there are robust empirical literatures on attraction, engagement, and retention of students to STEM majors and careers, and we turned to these studies and writings to inform most of the recruitment recommendations suggested here.

Recruiting Mentees Who Will Most Benefit from the Program and the Importance of Tailoring Recruitment Messages Based on Mentees' Current Engagement or Interest in STEM

Benchmark 1.7 addresses matching the needs of mentees to the services offered by the program. Whether programs recruit broadly or focuses on specific types of students to serve as mentees, their materials need to include basic information about their mentoring program components so that mentees (and parents) are well informed and have realistic expectations about what the mentoring program will offer. Topics for mentee recruitment materials include such things as a description of the program activities and requirements; brief biographies of mentors, particularly if they are faculty members; logistical commitments, such as program length, and meeting frequency, duration, and location; and whether the mentees receive any kind of compensation (in programs that offer internships or others work-like experiences).



Photo courtesy of Midlands Mentoring

Beyond these basic elements, STEM mentoring programs may use different strategies based on whether they are focused on *recruitment into* or *retention in* STEM fields.

Recruiting Students Already Engaged in STEM to Prevent Their Attrition

Whether STEM mentoring programs are focused on mentee recruitment to or retention in STEM, they may want to recruit students with an *intrinsic interest in or curiosity* about STEM (e.g., honor students in a STEM class in high school). If limited resources are available for implementing a STEM mentoring program, efforts may be best spent focusing on a population of mentees who may be most receptive to ultimately working in a STEM career.

Programs may recruit in locations where they can find these types of students (e.g., after-school clubs). Some mentoring programs focus on recruiting students at high risk for leaving a STEM field who have already decided to apply to study STEM or are enrolled in a STEM major, and therefore, they keep the bar low and attractive for program entry³³.

Regardless of who the program is recruiting, building mentoring experiences specifically to combat the reasons youth leave STEM pathways may maximize program success.

Reasons for Attrition in STEM Majors and Careers► ***Personal performance doubts***

Research on factors related to STEM attrition has revealed that students may leave a STEM field for a wide variety of reasons. For some students, their interests change and they become attracted to another discipline, while others may leave, not because their interests have changed, but for more personal performance reasons. Specifically, some students retain an interest in STEM, but leave a STEM major or career path because they don't feel like they belong or can be successful in a STEM major or career; they feel that they lack creativity; or they feel isolated^{34,35}. Low feelings of self-competence or self-efficacy in STEM can result in students not persisting in a major or discipline when they encounter challenges, obstacles, or failure experiences. These types of negative experiences are potentially manageable from an academic scholarship or performance perspective for many students, but become overwhelming and feel insurmountable for students who feel unsupported.

► ***Negative feelings, which are worse for students in underrepresented groups***

Students who are underrepresented in STEM fields such as women, first-generation college students, student with disabilities, and students in racial or ethnic minority groups^{36,37} are often found in this group of disenfranchised and alienated students. Furthermore, these underrepresented groups are also less likely to have relationships that help them in their education and career development³⁸ and report dissatisfaction in their careers due to a feeling of professional isolation^{39,40}. Feelings of isolation emerge early in one's education. In fact, one study noted that females were most likely to switch out of a STEM major between their freshman and sophomore years in college⁴¹. One implication of these findings are that STEM mentoring programs focused on retention might direct their efforts to recruiting students to participate during the summer after high school, as well as during the first year in college.

► ***The type of STEM experience***

Another key predictor of STEM retention is related to student's actual experiences in the STEM field. In fact, ongoing persistence in a STEM major has been found to be associated with having an academic adviser; experience participating in authentic professional events, such working on research projects; and attending or presenting at scientific conferences^{42,43}.

Implications for Mentee Recruitment Messages

Taken together, the findings from these studies on student retention provide ideas regarding content that might be included in recruitment messages into STEM mentoring programs:

- Being mentored may reduce feelings of isolation in a STEM class, major, or job.
- Being mentored may help mentees build communities that support a feeling of belonging in a STEM field.
- Normalizing the experience in science of experimentation sometimes works out differently than planned or hypothesized to reduce feelings of failure when experiments don't work.
- Mentors are available to help with educational and career advising in STEM and in general.
- The STEM mentoring program provides opportunities to engage in authentic STEM activities related to being in a STEM career with the support of a mentor.
- The STEM mentoring program sponsors or has mentees attend authentic professional STEM events with the support of a mentor.

Recruitment Messages Targeted to Students from Groups Underrepresented in STEM

Students from underrepresented groups frequently report that their teachers or professors were not welcoming and hence, they felt like they didn't belong⁴⁴. These findings suggest that recruitment materials should be warm and welcoming. They should also include messaging to prospective mentees that they have a place in the discipline and that it is inclusive of a diverse population of students and mentors. In other words, showing photographs or videos of mentors that are diverse with respect to gender, racial and ethnic background, and disability status will communicate acceptability of diversity within the STEM mentoring program.

The basic literature on STEM recruitment and retention suggests that messaging for underrepresented groups should directly address motivational factors associated with pursuing a STEM major or career. Motivation can be thought of in terms of one's goals and values, and in this case, goals related to one's career are particularly relevant.



Two types of goals have been found to be important to students from underrepresented groups:

► ***Anchoring STEM activities to real-life or relevant issues or questions***

Many students, even around the world⁴⁵, view STEM as irrelevant⁴⁶, particularly when STEM education, findings, or activities are presented in ways that are decontextualized from their everyday lives. This framing can be a barrier to engagement, but if understood and acknowledged, this perspective can also be leveraged in instructional design of curricula used in STEM programs, and consequently, in recruitment materials for STEM mentoring programs. In other words, STEM can be taught in a contextualized way, meaning that it can be made relevant to students by having them complete projects or activities that show how STEM can help us better understand the world students live in and by integrating its social, economic, environmental, (etc.), components⁴⁷. In fact, studies that examined the impact of contextualized STEM interventions with students have reported a range of positive effects.

► ***Communal goals and personal values of improving the world and the lives of others***

Working in a career that has personal relevance or meaning and that is consistent with one's values is particularly important to youth from underrepresented groups. These values tend to be communal and prosocial, meaning that students make helping their community a priority.

Implications for Mentee Recruitment Messages

► ***Showcase professionals engaged in science because of communal goals***

Many studies have now examined the career goals of groups who are underrepresented in STEM including women^{48,49,50,51}, minority groups (e.g., Native Americans, Latinos)^{52,53}, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds^{54,55}, and first-generation college students⁵⁶. Students in all of these groups have been found to be more likely to endorse communal goals of wanting to help others, the value of interdependence, and deep commitment to helping improve the lives of individuals in their communities than other goals or than their peers. For example, Black and Latino STEM students have reported having more altruistic goals focused on working for social change, as well as caring about equity and social justice issues more than White STEM

students^{57,57}. Even students who choose to pursue graduate work in a STEM field report having a bigger purpose in life and hope to serve as a role model for other students from underrepresented groups⁵⁹.

Another way these general goals get manifested is in a choice of major. For example, girls report a stronger interest in life sciences than in the physical sciences, because they believe that they will have a greater opportunity to help others in a career in the life sciences⁶⁰. Given these attitudes and beliefs, additional information about how STEM careers in the physical sciences, as well as life sciences, can help society may broaden girls' interests.

Another important message for attracting youth from underrepresented groups is to connect explicitly that working in a STEM career, and even simply completing the STEM activities in the mentoring program, can provide mentees with a means of helping others and contributing to improving the world. In fact, recruitment materials showing matches completing service learning projects in STEM or projects that connect science and society may be helpful for both recruitment to and retention in the mentoring program. Another approach to validating the communal nature of STEM is to ask mentors who are working or being educated in a STEM field to share why they chose their field of study or work and why they do the work that they are doing⁶¹. Their career goals and choices can be shared in print materials, in videotaped interviews or testimonials, through social media, and/or on the mentoring program's website. Mentors may have well-articulated and passionate reasons for their chosen field that may be motivating and affirming to students with similar communal goals.

Remember, "One size does not fit all" when it comes to career motivation. Although the research suggests that students from underrepresented groups are, on average, more motivated by communal goals or wanting to help people than other goal, these goals are not held by all students. Other goals are also important to represent when recruiting students into a STEM program such as having an intellectual curiosity about a topic, or simply finding certain STEM activities pleasurable.

► ***Collaboration is desirable over solitary work***

Communal goals not only include science that gives back to the community, but also work that involves collaboration⁶².

Having collaborative goals predicted interest in science, particularly for women⁶³. Collaboration is important, but not at the expense of prosocial goals for a STEM career, which are paramount⁶⁴.

Students frequently have negative stereotypes about people working in STEM careers, unfortunately believing that STEM work results in a lonely and solitary life⁶⁵. These common, but inaccurate, stereotypes depict scientists as geniuses toiling away alone through the night in a lab, or as a quirky computer geeks obsessed with writing computer code and sitting for days on end alone at the computer. In addition, scientists are frequently stereotyped as having poor social skills, and being temperamental, hard to work with, and socially awkward. These negative stereotypes can undermine attempts to recruit students to participate in STEM who want to be socially competent, if not popular, and have communal goals focused on collaboration. Unfortunately, much of the popular culture reinforces these stereotypes—however, it is worth noting that these stereotypes are malleable and can be modified through positive media representations of people in STEM jobs where STEM professionals are shown as sociable, interesting, fun to work with, and even “cool”⁶⁶.

Taken together, these findings suggest that mentee recruitment materials for STEM programs would benefit from showing examples of mentors and mentees having fun together working collaboratively on a STEM project that may involve innovative forms of technology (e.g., virtual reality) and games⁶⁷. These recruitment materials would be designed to counter directly the negative stereotypes of people working in STEM fields and what it is like to work in a STEM field⁶⁸.

One noteworthy caveat is that all students do not enjoy working collaboratively with others and may prefer an independent working environment, for a variety of reasons. Working in a STEM field allows for very diverse working environments that can include students who prefer not to work on a team.

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2

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

▶ SCREENING

MENTOR SCREENING

Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants. (B.2.1)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs should emphasize screening for mentors who:

- Exhibit strong social skills (in addition to strong subject matter expertise).
- Are willing to talk about their personal experiences in the STEM field, especially in programs designed to help youth overcome systemic or personal challenges to a STEM education or career.

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

When appropriate, and to the degree possible, STEM mentoring programs should screen mentors on the demographic or background characteristics that match the youth who will be served by the program, particularly if the program is designed to interest underrepresented youth in STEM fields.

Prospective mentors agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or a minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program. (B.2.6) And prospective mentors agree in writing to participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentees that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by their mentoring program. (B.2.7)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs should assess during the screening process whether prospective mentors may have scheduling challenges or conflicts that would hinder their full participation in the program, screening out those who may be unable to meet with mentees consistently (e.g., potentially challenging groups may include college students, employees at local STEM companies, and faculty in higher education).

MENTEE SCREENING

Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant. (B.2.8)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs, when appropriate and particularly in programs with capped enrollment, may want to prioritize accepting youth of color, girls and young women, youth with disabilities, first-generation college students, and other groups that may be underrepresented in STEM fields and careers.

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs may want to set eligibility criteria around STEM experience or skills, accepting mentees who can participate fully in the STEM content of the program (while offering supplemental instruction and other supports to those screened out of participation in the program).

Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or the minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program. (B.2.11) And parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing that mentees participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and number of hours that are required by the mentoring program. (B.2.12)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs may want to utilize screening tools to assess whether or not applicants to be mentees can:

- Meet logistical expectations regarding the timing, frequency, and length of match meetings.
- Commit to full participation in all required program activities, especially in programs focused on matches completing longer-term research projects.



Justification

As with all mentoring programs for young people, STEM mentoring programs should put considerable effort into ensuring that prospective mentors are both safe and suitable for the task at hand and that youth participants and their families meet eligibility and participation requirements. Unfortunately, much of the specific practice that informs screening is largely ignored in the research literature we reviewed—no studies or reports mentioned safety practices such as conducting criminal background checks and only a handful described participant eligibility requirements^{1,2,3,4}. Similarly, we found no STEM mentoring studies that tested the effectiveness, or compared variations, of a specific screening practice. However, there is information in the research literature, subsequently confirmed by the project’s Working Group of STEM practitioners, which speaks to screening practices that are theoretically important for screening program participants for suitability.

We do assume that the programs described in the literature are also engaging in safety-related screening practices, although it is unclear if programs using university faculty and students or employees of STEM companies as mentors are doing additional safety-related screening beyond what is mandated for involvement in those institutions more generally. As noted in the fourth Edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, we encourage *all* programs to conduct relevant criminal record checks, as well as in-person interviews and reference checks to ensure that mentors are safe prior to engaging young people directly through the program. Thus, the recommendations for STEM mentoring that follow here are primarily focused on suitability and ensuring that all participants are a good fit for the program experience.

MENTOR SCREENING

One of the core challenges of running an effective STEM mentoring program is ensuring that mentors and youth are put in positions to form an authentic, mutual, and rewarding relationship that exists beyond the STEM activities and academic opportunities provided by the program. Relationships can sometimes take a back seat to doing hands-on STEM work in these programs. While many of these relationship concerns can be addressed by simply building explicit relationship-building activities and interactions into the design of the program, there are some screening-related practices that can help facilitate more meaningful mentoring relationships in the STEM context.

As noted in **Benchmark B.2.1**, all mentoring programs are encouraged to think carefully about the eligibility criteria for mentor participation. Going beyond safety-related eligibility criteria (e.g., passing a background check), many programs develop eligibility requirements around the life experiences, skills, personalities, and other characteristics that mentors bring to the table (for an example of a program that has put considerable thought into mentor characteristics, see Bowling, Doyle, Taylor, & Antes, 2015⁵).

For STEM mentoring programs, several criteria stood out as being potential “must-haves” in terms of mentors’ ability to build effective relationships in these types of programs:

► *Strong social skills*

While most programs seek out adults with STEM expertise to serve as mentors, the members of our practitioner Working Group felt strongly that mentors also need to bring at least adequate relational skills to the mentoring role. Programs may want to screen out prospective mentors who, while they may bring STEM content knowledge or connections to STEM environments to the program, might struggle to form relationships with the youth and provide the kind of empathy, trust, guidance, and understanding that we commonly associate with quality mentoring relationships.

Several programs in our literature review specifically noted the effort they put into the relationship-fostering components of their interventions, such as providing matches with “open” meeting times not focused directly on STEM⁶, asking about social skills and the ability to motivate students in positive ways during the interview process⁷, and by emphasizing that the mentoring role is grounded as much in psychosocial and emotional support as it is in direct STEM work during mentor training⁸. This last strategy implies that some relationship skills can be enhanced via pre-match training, but programs will want to avoid thinking that STEM expertise alone will make for a good mentor and screen out participants who don’t seem right for the more personal and empathetic aspects of the mentor role.

► *A willingness to talk about their personal journey in STEM*

This recommendation was strongly implied in the research literature as a core strategy in programs designed to serve girls, youth of color, youth from low socioeconomic



backgrounds, youth with disabilities, and other groups who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM higher education settings and careers. In those programs, having a mentor, ideally one with a shared background or similar personal challenges to a STEM career, openly talk with youth about their experiences and strategies for overcoming systemic and institutional barriers is one of the key drivers of helping youth build STEM identity and see STEM careers and something achievable (i.e., seeing their possible “future self” in the mentor). Research on this aspect of STEM mentoring programs notes that some mentors may not be comfortable discussing their own struggles to persevere in STEM fields⁹, which may limit the effectiveness of their interactions. Each STEM mentoring program will need to decide for themselves just how critical this type of self-disclosure and personal sharing by mentors is to their theory of change and screen out mentors who are unable to complete this aspect of their roles and responsibilities accordingly.

The only other recommendation related to B.2.1 is that mentors, to the degree possible, should be reflective of the population being served by the program and that screening processes represent an opportunity for program staff to emphasize diversity when accepting mentors into the program. Members of our Working Group were, however, adamant that it was logistically challenging to match *every* youth with a STEM mentor who shares their background, gender, or disability status, and that there were strong reasons to emphasize other criteria, such as expertise in specific STEM fields. There were also hints in the research literature that *only* selecting mentors who fit a certain demographic profile can limit the appeal and effectiveness of the mentoring experience for youth¹⁰. But given that so much of the STEM mentoring field is aimed at addressing issues of systemic underrepresentation in STEM careers, it only makes sense that programs consider emphasizing demographic characteristics when trying to place mentors into limited spaces in the program. We certainly noted many examples in the literature of programs explicitly centered on gender¹¹, disability¹², and racial barriers¹³ and how mentees can overcome related challenges, indicating that maximizing diverse youths’ exposure to diverse mentors is likely important for effective STEM mentoring. These types of same-vs-cross-demographic considerations are addressed in more detail in the following section on Matching and Initiation.

Another key consideration in screening mentors, covered in the main *Elements* under **B.2.6** and **B.2.7**, is screening out mentors that are unlikely to be able to meet the minimum participatory requirements of the program. Many of our Working Group participants noted that it could be challenging, especially when working with employees of STEM companies or with students from colleges and universities, to find mentors who could consistently meet with their mentee or mentoring group. This challenge was rarely mentioned in the research literature, but we know from previous research on mentoring more broadly that mentors who cannot meet consistently with youth for the intended duration of the program are unlikely to be effective and may actually harm youth with their sporadic and unpredictable engagement¹⁴. Given that many STEM mentoring programs involve mentors and youth meeting at a location (e.g., a school or worksite) that requires one or both parties to travel and perhaps take time away from classroom or work time, these types of logistical and scheduling-related challenges seem like predictable obstacles to matches meeting as intended. At least one program in the research literature noted struggling with this particular issue, ultimately needing to directly transport mentors from STEM companies to the school to ensure their consistent participation¹⁵. Programs will want to emphasize participation frequency and schedule availability when assessing whether mentors can effectively fill their role.

It should be noted, however, that STEM mentoring programs for middle and high school students frequently use college students in the mentoring role, something cautioned against in **Enhancement E.2.5** of the main *Elements*. Given that many successful STEM programs rely on mentors that the literature suggests can be a challenge getting to adhere to match expectations, one can infer that there are solutions to these challenges, such as engaging campus faculty in monitoring undergraduate mentors’ attendance or having the program itself provide transportation to groups of student mentors, as noted in the previous program example. For an example of how one STEM mentoring program ensures that college students can meet the expectations of the program, see the case study on Sea Research Foundation on the next page.



Photo courtesy of Sea Research Foundation

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Sea Research Foundation

Many STEM mentoring programs utilize college students as mentors, but **SEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION'S STEM MENTORING** initiative has found that their sites must take special precautions during the screening process to determine whether a college student can successfully fulfill the expectations of the program. College students often have large swaths of availability during the day, making them uniquely able to participate in programs that occur during school or after-school hours; however, their changing schedules and transience means that their availability may be seasonal and vary across semesters.

To ensure that college students can accommodate the program's schedule, STEM Mentoring sites discuss timelines and scheduling as soon as mentors are recruited. Mentors must complete an application and an interview in which they're asked about their availability and whether they understand that the program is a year-long commitment. Sites also tell prospective mentors that matches that end early or without proper closure can negatively impact the young person, so it's important to commit to the full mentoring engagement period.

When college students aren't able to commit to the year-long program because they leave the area for the summer or during school vacations, STEM Mentoring has several options. Some sites do not accept college students who can't fulfill the program requirements. Other sites have chosen to match young people with two mentors, so a second mentor—often a teen mentor—will be present if the college student leaves for school break. Finally, other sites that are more reliant upon college students compress their program's timeline to align with the local college's academic calendar, so that the full program is completed over a nine-month period instead of a full calendar year.

MENTEE SCREENING

As with mentor screening, Benchmarks **B.2.11** and **B.2.12** address using screening procedures to ensure that youth (and their parents) can effectively meet the programs' expectations around meeting frequency and duration. While few of the research articles we reviewed directly addressed logistical and scheduling challenges (only one noted that it would end up being a major barrier¹⁶), our practitioner Working Group did note that their programs emphasize the time and travel commitments of the program to youth and families, screening out youth who were unlikely to participate at the highest level. Most of this emphasis on full participation was not inherently born out of concerns related to fidelity of implementation of the program model (i.e., ensuring youth are positioned to get the “dosage” of mentoring the program desired) but rather reflected concerns about competition for limited program slots. STEM mentoring programs often have greater demand than they have available openings and many wanted to ensure those limited slots went to youth who could fully engage in program activities and maximize the use of program resources.

Far more common in the research literature were descriptions of the eligibility criteria programs placed on youth applicants. These eligibility criteria are generally covered under **Benchmark B.2.8** in the main *Elements*, where the identification of specific eligibility criteria has largely been left to individual programs to decide what is appropriate to their services and what they hope to achieve for young people. In our literature review, we found many articles and reports detailing extensive eligibility criteria for youth participants, most of which fell into two categories:

► ***Criteria around demographic characteristics of participants***

As noted above, many of these programs are structured rather intentionally around specific groups of young people underrepresented in STEM fields and their eligibility and selection criteria often reflected this emphasis. About two-thirds of the articles we initially reviewed for this supplement dealt explicitly with strategies or programs to increase the engagement of underrepresented groups in STEM higher education and careers. Given this emphasis in the field, it seems logical that many STEM mentoring programs would want to prioritize screening in girls and young women, youth with disabilities, youth of color, or youth from low-income backgrounds. Given limited spots in these types



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of programs, this type of emphasis on demographic selection criteria seems in spirit with the intention of many STEM mentoring programs.

► ***Criteria related to mentees' academic achievement and readiness for the mentoring experience being offered***

Many STEM mentoring programs in our review noted the rigorous academic eligibility criteria they placed on program participants^{17,18,19,20}. Simply put, many of these programs required students to have demonstrated some mastery or aptitude for STEM subjects in school and only selected those who were, in theory, ready to participate fully in the academic tasks of the program. This was most common in programs serving high school- or college-age youth, which were often centered on laboratory internships or other direct, hands-on research projects requiring a certain level of STEM proficiency. Many programs noted that their application process was highly competitive and had lofty criteria for eligibility in the program.

But other programs approached issues of diversity in STEM mentoring from a different perspective. Some explicitly sought out students of color who had exhibited some STEM potential but whose grades lagged behind their peers in an effort to support those STEM students who were most likely to leave their potential untapped²¹. Others explicitly sought out youth who were disengaged from STEM altogether in a last-chance effort to spark an interest in STEM with older students²².

What seems critical for STEM mentoring programs is that they carefully consider the basic level of STEM competence and skills needed to successfully participate in their program. The last thing STEM programs need to do is place mentees in settings that are far beyond their demonstrated skills and abilities, thus worsening youths' self-perception of their STEM competence and identity. On the other hand, focusing only on students who have shown no or little STEM aptitude or interest leaves programs with a tougher task and potentially might keep the best prospects from getting the hands-on, intensive STEM experiences that research suggests can ensure that high achievers continue on with their STEM education in the face of challenges. Ideally, programs would be able to respond to the needs of youth on multiple levels: both screening out mentees who may not yet possess the academic qualifications to participate fully in programs centered on deeper research experiences, while also referring those youth to additional tutoring or instruction that can better prepare them for future program cycles or mentoring opportunities in other settings. Research suggests^{23,24} that helping youth catch up to their peers via additional tutoring or academic instruction so that they are positioned for future mentoring opportunities can increase diversity in STEM education and industries.

As with most screening of mentoring participants, the best thing STEM mentoring programs can do is think carefully about who can best benefit from their mentoring services and what skills mentors and youth need to bring to the table to be successful. In addition to ensuring the safety of participants, screening around issues of suitability will help maximize program impact and the wise use of limited resources.

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2

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

▶ TRAINING

MENTOR TRAINING

Program provides a minimum of two hours of pre-match, in-person, mentor training. (B.3.1)

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs that involve mentors and mentees conducting STEM activities together should require training not only in how to develop an effective, close mentoring relationship with one or more mentees, but also training on other topics. Because of the increased training demands on STEM mentors, pre-match mentor training will need to last more than a minimum of two hours.

Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics [see main *Elements* for full listing of original topics] (B.3.2):

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs often focus their training on the role of being a positive role model to mentees with the goal of building mentees' sense of belonging in a STEM field and establishing their scientific identity. Two additional key roles need to be incorporated into mentor training content.

- ▶ Mentors need to be trained to be a connector or advocate for their mentees to connect them to other people, places, experiences, or opportunities related to STEM.
- ▶ Traditional mentor training should be included in STEM mentor training with a focus on the importance of being a trusted, adult friend to mentees in order to establish a caring, supportive mentoring relationship.

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

Because communal goals may be highly valued by female, first-generation, and racial and ethnic minority students, mentor training needs to include strategies to highlight communal opportunities in STEM for programs targeting these populations.

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

Because female and minority students frequently encounter negative stereotypes and lower expectations of their intellect and abilities, additional topics for pre- (or post) match training for mentors in a STEM mentoring program are needed to help mentees overcome barriers to success in STEM coursework or common challenges experienced when exploring or entering STEM careers. These topics include:

- ▶ Cultural awareness training on negative stereotypes and lower expectations, unconscious biases, and diversity and inclusion;
- ▶ Strategies for supporting feelings of self-efficacy and belonging;
- ▶ Communicating admiration and respect for mentees;
- ▶ Talking with their mentees about traditional barriers to STEM education and STEM careers including race, gender, socioeconomic status, and disability;
- ▶ Teaching and providing feedback on workplace norms and behaviors in ways that are culturally responsive and empowering for youth; and
- ▶ Fostering a growth mindset in youth.

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

Mentors can be trained to help build sustained career interests in STEM by communicating a meaningful passion for their work, as well as a strong sense of purpose participating in a deeply fulfilling, positive, and meaningful career.

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

Because STEM mentoring programs are often group-based and conducted at program sites, mentor training should address how to establish a caring, supportive, and individual mentoring relationship with each member of the group.

Program provides pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served. [See main *Elements* for full listing of original topics.] (B.3.3)



▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs that include conducting scientific experiments or going on field trips may need to develop risk management policies and mentor training on these policies to protect the safety of mentees and mentors.

Program uses training practices and materials that are informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated. (B.3.4)

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs may consider adopting or adapting general or STEM-specific mentor training materials that have been informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated.

Program provides additional pre- and post-match mentor training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more. (E.3.1)

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

When STEM mentoring programs have matches conduct STEM activities or experiments together, ongoing mentor training is likely needed in the following topics:

- ▶ Facilitating STEM activities. Training could be conducted in advance of the meeting or just-in-time, and virtually (e.g., online videos, video or web conferences) or at an in-person, instructor-led workshop.
- ▶ How to conduct the program's STEM activities in a safe and successful way.
- ▶ Being cautious about using an overly technical vocabulary with mentees without providing them with definitions or explanations.
- ▶ The importance of simplifying explanations and instructions so that they are developmentally appropriate for the target audience of mentees.
- ▶ The scientific method, critical thinking, and continuing problem-solving.

MENTEE AND PARENT/GUARDIAN TRAINING

Program provides training for the mentee on the following topics [see main *Elements* for full listing of original topics] (E.3.4):

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

Because many STEM mentoring programs involve having mentees work in authentic STEM settings or with STEM professionals serving as mentors, some additional mentee training topics should be addressed that may support a positive mentoring relationship, but are not necessarily central to being a mentee.

- ▶ Bioethics in research with human subjects
- ▶ Professional ethics (licensing, plagiarism, authorship credit)
- ▶ Coursework prerequisites
- ▶ Scientific research methods
- ▶ Career opportunities
- ▶ Networking skills

Program provides training for the mentee on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served. [See main *Elements* for full listing of original topics.] (E.3.5)

▶ STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs that include conducting scientific experiments or going on field trips may need to develop risk management policies and mentee training on these policies to protect the safety of mentees and their mentors.

Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics [see main *Elements* for full listing of original topics] (E.3.6):

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs provide parents or guardians with training on how they can support and encourage the mission, goals, and activities of the STEM mentoring program, as well as provide support to the STEM mentoring relationship.

Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served. [See main Elements for full listing of original topics.] (E.3.7)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

STEM mentoring programs that include conducting scientific experiments or going on field trips may need to develop risk management policies and parent or guardian training on these policies to protect the safety of mentees and their mentors.

Justification

Training, both prior to initiating the mentoring relationship and over time as the relationship evolves, is considered to be fundamental to mentoring program success. STEM mentoring programs should adhere to all of the training benchmark practices described in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring (4th Ed.)*. This chapter describes some ways in which these practices and program enhancements may be most applicable to STEM mentoring programs. Most of the empirical research on mentor or mentee training in STEM programs was conducted with undergraduate student mentees, and some even with graduate student, postgraduate student, or junior faculty/employee mentees. The findings from these studies are often integrated into the recommendations below because they do not appear to be only relevant to a particular setting or age group. In addition, some suggestions for program practices were based upon suggestions from the practice experiences of members of this project's Working Group.

MENTOR TRAINING

Increase the Minimum Duration of Pre-match Mentor Training

The first training benchmark (B.3.1) addresses the required minimum duration for pre-match training of mentors and defines it as being two hours. For STEM mentoring programs, two hours is not sufficient to address all of the topics needed to establish the readiness and competency of a STEM mentor. As discussed later in this section, we recommend a total of at least six hours of pre- and post-match training combined so that mentors are prepared for the tasks and activities of the program based on the following considerations.

It Takes Time to Train Mentors to Lead STEM Activities

In general, STEM mentoring programs that include training in activities and/or a focus on fostering an interest in ongoing education or building a career in STEM can't address all of the topics needed to prepare STEM mentors adequately in only two hours. For example, one program in our research review offered a *full-day* orientation workshop prior to the start of the mentoring program¹. For a real-life example of a program that emphasizes training mentors to successfully lead STEM experiments and activities, see the work of Sea Research Foundation on the next page.

Many STEM Mentoring Programs Involve Group-Based Mentoring and Curricula

Serving as a mentor to one or more students, while simultaneously leading STEM activities, can be a challenging job. When STEM activities require technical expertise, attention to task, or complex steps, this can take most of your attention. In these situations, actual mentoring and the establishment of a mentoring relationship may be diminished. Because of these challenges, some mentoring programs have moved away from having volunteer mentors deliver or lead activities, and instead, utilize their paid staff members in this role². However, if a STEM mentoring program does have mentors lead activities, it will take extra time in training to teach the instructions for completing the activity in addition to more general mentor training topics.

One training model that programs have tried is to have volunteer mentors experience the activity first, so they are familiar with the steps and subject matter, and then, have them lead their mentees in the activity. This approach may be helpful for group-based STEM mentoring. It is worth noting that this curriculum-centered approach is more rigid in that all mentors and mentees might need to complete the same activities at the same time.



Photo courtesy of Sea Research Foundation

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Sea Research Foundation

THE STEM MENTORING PROGRAM we run does not require that mentors have expertise in STEM, so an important component of mentor training covers how to conduct the program's hands-on STEM activities with mentees. STEM Mentoring's initial mentor training focuses on best practices in mentoring, boundaries, communication, and program structure, as well as information on how to facilitate STEM activities with young people. The mentors get into groups of five, with four assuming the "mentee" role and one assuming the "mentor" role; the group then conducts an activity together to help mentors experience what these activities and group dynamics might look and feel like.

Matches conduct new activities every session, so Program Coordinators communicate with mentors beforehand to walk them through each activity. STEM Mentoring has found that when mentors are oriented to the activities and materials, they are more confident and better able to concentrate on building and strengthening relationships during the sessions with mentees. If mentors aren't busy looking for materials or figuring out technology, they can be more attuned to their group's needs and can solve interpersonal issues and answer mentees' questions as they arise.

Approaches to helping mentors learn activities vary by site. Some sites meet with mentors 15 minutes before each session to review the day's activities and materials. Program Coordinators walk mentors through the activity and introduce them to any needed equipment. This model has worked well, although mentors need to be advised upfront that their weekly commitment will include an extra 15 minutes for preparation. Other sites conduct a content training with mentors before the start of each new curriculum module to review the activities for the entire module at once. Some sites find it difficult to convene mentors for extra sessions, so they instead send instructions and videos virtually through a weekly newsletter. All sites are also provided with PDFs of the Mentor Guides and links to webinar trainings for each curriculum module that they are encouraged to share with mentors.

Other approaches are more individualized, where mentors and mentees complete activities that reflect the goals and interests of the mentees. This more individualized approach may better lend itself to a one-to-one mentoring relationship or small mentor-to-mentee ratios.

Training Demands, Particularly Those Related to STEM Activity Instruction, May Be Reduced if Mentors Are STEM Professionals

Mentoring programs that integrate mentees into pre-existing STEM activities in educational or research institutions or workplaces, and that rely on mentors who are already experts in their field, don't have the same burden of training mentors in the instructions for carrying out the STEM content and can focus mentor training on the development of a mentoring relationship. In these cases, it may be possible to complete mentor training in two hours, but more time will likely be needed.

Train STEM Mentors to Build a Scientific Identity and Commitment to STEM in Mentees

The second training benchmark (B.3.2) addresses the core topics for pre-match mentor training. Training topics need to reflect the main goals of the mentoring program, especially in how the program is attempting to create or solidify youths' sense of STEM identity. There are at least two stages in the typical mentee's trajectory to entering a STEM profession. First, as noted in the Introduction, programs can be designed to pique students' interest in learning more about a STEM field and that make STEM activities seem exciting, rewarding, and interesting. Mentor training for mentoring youth in these types of programs might focus on instilling excitement for STEM.

However, once a student has declared an interest in a STEM major in school or STEM career, then programs may need to focus more on supporting and sustaining those existing interests, and less on just generating excitement for STEM. Consistent with this idea, receiving mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on students from groups that are underrepresented in STEM majors and careers. Unfortunately, these youth are frequently less likely to receive mentoring than their peers who are not members of underrepresented groups³. Thus, once mentees are recruited into mentoring programs, retaining them in the program and designing it to meet their needs is critically important.

There are several key things to consider emphasizing in STEM mentor training:

Training on Being a STEM Connector or Advocate

STEM mentors need to help connect their mentees to opportunities, people, and places to support their growth and development in STEM, as well as to advocate for their mentees at their institution and other educational or career settings. In fact, students in groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM will likely need help locating resources (e.g., financial, informational) and role models in STEM and should be encouraged to build both weak and strong ties with others in their field⁴.

In addition to being a connector, STEM mentors need to advocate for their mentees. Part of being an advocate is also socializing mentees into the profession and helping them with their personal and career development in addition to exposing them to research skills which can enhance their identity as a scientist^{5,6} and their commitment to a research career⁷. Learning about the scientific method, scholarly writing, and professional behavior with colleagues are all ways that mentors in STEM can serve as role models, instructors, and advocates to mentees. For example, women and other underrepresented groups may benefit more from sponsorship than just mentoring⁸, meaning that they may need less advice and more advocacy to advance in their careers.

Training on Being a Trusted, Adult Friend to Mentees

Many STEM mentoring programs discuss the importance of training mentors in the STEM-related activities conducted in their programs; however, STEM mentoring programs acknowledge that the most important factor related to mentoring success is the quality of the relationship between the mentor and mentee⁹, which reflects the findings reported in the general literature on mentoring. Thus, friendship is central to relationship success.

There is a large amount of literature on mentor training in undergraduate STEM mentoring programs that has many interesting and relevant implications for K–12 STEM mentoring programs. Research findings show that when mentors support students' personal and career development, as well as learning research skills, it contributes to strong positive outcomes. In fact, students' self-efficacy for conducting research and science identity were enhanced by close relationships with mentors^{10,11,12} and participation in research-focused mentoring relationships¹³, which further contribute to a stronger interest in and commitment

to having a STEM career¹⁴. For example, when faculty showed concern and were supportive and accessible in the context of talking about substantive topics (e.g., discussing papers, projects, and feedback on coursework; assisting on a research project; and discussing career plans), one study found academic performance in Latina/o college students was enhanced¹⁵.

In another example, encouragement and support from mentors were mentioned by high school students attending a summer bridge program as one of the most valuable aspects of the research experience¹⁶. Training on how to provide psychosocial support through statements of encouragement and by communicating belief in the students' capacity to be successful in STEM—while acknowledging and discussing struggles, concerns, and fears—is particularly important for mentees with a disability¹⁷. The importance of training mentors on being encouraging and positive with mentees by using microaffirmations is discussed later in this section.

Training on Highlighting Communal Goals and Opportunities in STEM

There are many studies that have examined the career goals of groups of students who are underrepresented in STEM including women^{18,19,20,21}, minority groups (e.g., Native Americans, Latinos)^{22,23}, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds^{24,25}, and first-generation college students²⁶. Notably, students in all of these groups are more likely to endorse communal goals of wanting to help others, the value of interdependence in their work, and a deep commitment to helping improve the lives of individuals in their communities than other goals or than their peers. Many mentees, particularly from underrepresented groups, are turned off from STEM because they perceive the work to be lonely or solitary, or that the goals of STEM jobs are not altruistic or for the common good. This topic was addressed in the Recruitment Standard, but is also relevant for mentor training, which can teach mentors to address mentee's goals and desired work contexts. Communicating communal goals and providing communal opportunities in STEM mentoring programs may enhance interest in a STEM career. For example, in one study, high school students attending a precollege, summer mentoring program on electrical engineering had near-peer mentors who worked closely with them on team projects²⁷, enabling mentees to experience the collaborative and interactive nature of STEM projects.

Additional training topics for building STEM-related career skills

Training in how to support specific STEM-related career development activities could be helpful to mentors to provide structure to their activities and discussions. For example, one program trained mentors in how to engage mentees in six STEM activities, such as shadowing the mentor at work or in college; reviewing the mentee's high school transcript and developing a plan for taking STEM courses; and meeting with parents or guardians to share what mentees were learning in the program²⁸. Programs may want to consider how they train their mentors to address career-related topics such as:

Supporting Mentees' Sense of Competency

Studies have investigated factors that may diminish interest in STEM education or careers, even among those who have strong STEM interests. Factors including not having a sense of belonging or identity in a STEM field as well as not believing that one can grow and learn challenging material (i.e., not having a growth mind-set) have been examined in relation to STEM persistence. Even high achieving STEM students have been found to be plagued by feelings of self-doubt, low confidence, and a sense of not belonging in their field, particularly when they have teachers who pick favorites in their classes from students who are from more privileged backgrounds²⁹. When students are aspiring to be in a STEM field, it is important for mentors to counter these self-critical feelings and communicate that their mentees are capable and competent, as well as the fact that they will make meaningful contributions to their field^{30,31,32}. For example, training has been designed to help young professional STEM mentors develop a close, supportive relationship as well as foster feelings of competence in science in their college freshman mentees in Quebec (same age as high school seniors in the United States)³³. By affirming these skills, abilities, and belonging in science, mentor training focused on research mentoring of undergraduates has increased both mentors' and mentees' satisfaction in their mentoring relationships^{34,35,36}.

Supporting Mentees' Tolerance for Failure

These attitudes about competency and belonging, while important, appear to be less important than having low performance avoidance goals. In other words, working in a STEM field requires a high tolerance for failure and not avoiding performance for fear of failure. Scientists can spend

years designing and executing an experiment or study, and it is highly possible that it may not work out. Individuals who blame themselves for failure or lack of significant findings are at risk for leaving STEM—in other words, the more someone’s sense of competency or sense of self feels threatened, the greater the likelihood that they will quit. That is why students not only need exposure to fun and interesting STEM activities that may be easy to execute or whose outcomes are well-known, but they also need exposure to authentic or less predictable STEM experiences that can enhance research skills, career knowledge, and research self-efficacy^{37,38}. STEM mentors can be trained to talk about the research method, normalize failure experiences (e.g., failed experiments, rejections of grant proposals, submissions to conferences for presentations, submissions of journal articles to peer-reviewed journals), and help build fortitude and stamina for coping with rejection.

Mentors also need the message that it’s alright to let the mentee fail at something reinforced in their training. Often mentors will rush to step in and do activities themselves if the mentee is struggling. But, as noted above, failure is part of learning and central to the scientific method and mentors need to know when to back off and allow their mentee to learn through failure in a growth mind-set perspective.

Providing Mentee’s with Authentic Research Experiences

Engaging in authentic research projects has many benefits for career preparation in a STEM field³⁹. For example, in one study, mentors who showed interest in mentee’s research projects, appreciated their mentee’s contributions to the projects, offered constructive feedback, helped mentees to understand how the mentee’s research activities fit into an overall research project, and made the mentee feel included in the lab increased mentee’s self-efficacy and academic outcomes⁴⁰.

In another example, a report from the U.S. Department of Education indicated that failure to be engaged with rigorous and interesting STEM course work during one’s freshman year in college and the level of success in these STEM courses were better predictors of switching to another major than many other factors⁴¹. Thus, mentoring programs designed for students who have already expressed an interest in STEM may shift their focus from simple, light activity-based programming to programs where mentees engage in challenging, high-skill, authentic STEM activities.

Cultural Awareness Training to Support and Encourage Mentees from Groups That are Traditionally Underrepresented in STEM Fields

Avoiding and Mitigating Stereotype Threats

Mentors need to understand how stereotype threats can negatively impact students’ academic functioning⁴², as well as how to manage stereotype threats, to reduce the likelihood that students from underrepresented groups in STEM misinterpret or attribute lack of success in research projects to themselves⁴³. Evaluations of interventions suggest that mentors’ and mentees’ reports of relationship quality can be enhanced with training^{44,45,46}. Furthermore, “colorblind mentoring,” where mentors have the belief that race should not and does not matter, can have a negative effect on mentee’s development because ignoring race in STEM will not help equip mentees with knowledge and skills to address racism in the classroom or workplace⁴⁷. Beyond race and ethnicity, the consequences of stereotype threat are also a concern in mentoring of youth with disabilities. Mentors in one study we reviewed reported wanting training in how to talk to their mentees about disabilities and how having a disability could impact the student’s career development⁴⁸. Mentees from other underrepresented groups may also want to address these issues with their mentors. For example, another study found that women mentees in underrepresented racial and ethnic minority groups in science and engineering want to discuss issues of race and ethnicity with their mentors more than their white peers do⁴⁹.

One way that mentors can be helpful to traditionally underrepresented youth is to teach them skills to cope with and manage the barriers they may encounter entering a STEM field. However, mentors often come from middle-class backgrounds, or because of their education or career trajectories have moved into middle- or upper-class status. The expectations, perceptions of academic ability, and interpretations of behavior of white teachers and mentors are often negatively affected when their protégés are from ethnic and racial groups^{50,51}. Thus, mentees may see them as outsiders or not credible sources of information. Mentors who aren’t from traditionally underrepresented groups may benefit from additional training to uncover their own biases and avoid stereotyping their mentees.



Being Aware of Microaggressions

Microaggressions are subtle assaults, insults, or invalidations directed at people of color that can be intentional or unintentional and that may be expressed verbally or nonverbally⁵². These often brief, everyday forms of aggression and discrimination can result in perceptions of discrimination, which can have an immediate effect on someone's mood, self-esteem, and sense of acceptance and belonging⁵³ as well as more long-term, debilitating effects on social isolation, mental and physical health, and academic performance and persistence^{54,55,56,57}. Mentor training can help raise their awareness and skills about the ways that race, class, and gender may effect disparities in STEM careers, and strategies for mitigating these factors. For example, heightening mentors' awareness that their mentees are often the recipients of racial stereotypes and microaggressions both in educational and workplace contexts and teaching them to deal effectively with their own unconscious biases⁵⁸ can help build their empathy and advocacy skills with their mentees⁵⁹.

Engaging in Microaffirmations

Some researchers have suggested that engaging in microaffirmations, small acts to enhance inclusion and support such as communicating to students that they are “welcome, visible, and capable of performing well” in school, can be helpful in positively supporting the academic resilience and persistence of minority students, particularly in STEM fields^{60,61}. Mentor training topics could build upon effective educator training that focuses on microaffirmation messages including how they can positively impact student success, support a growth mind-set and self-efficacy, and promote mentees' STEM educational and career opportunities⁶².

Providing Feedback in Culturally Sensitive Ways

One of the most valuable things a mentor can do when orienting a mentee to the STEM world is teach the workplace norms, behavioral expectations, and other “soft skills” that define STEM work. However, they also need training to illustrate how to provide feedback around behavioral and procedural expectations that doesn't cause underrepresented youth to feel alienated in STEM environments. As noted previously, the people who are defining what professional behavior is in these environments may not have a shared background or culture with the youth in the program. They can, albeit inadvertently, say things or correct behavior that is subjectively unprofessional (like not being friendly, not participating fully in a meeting, not asking questions) that may be grounded more in cultural differences than other reasons. Mentors should note cultural differences and make sure

that all youth feel welcome in STEM environments, even when providing feedback about behavioral expectations.

Establishing Trust

Mentors will benefit from learning about issues of cultural awareness and diversity. Minority youth often feel that they are the victims of negative stereotypes about the group that they are a member (“stereotype threat”) and that they may not be competent in their work despite past success or accomplishments (“imposter syndrome”), which together may contribute to their lack of persistence in a STEM career. Mentor training in the importance of and skills for being dependable, trustworthy, and respectful are fundamental topics for inclusion in all pre-match mentor training^{63,64}. However, the interpersonal vulnerability of students in underrepresented groups makes the trustworthiness of mentors potentially even more important for establishing a high-quality mentoring relationship, and supporting the motivation to pursue STEM majors and careers, than it is for students who are not members of a racial or ethnic minority group⁶⁵.

Furthermore, explaining what trust means in this context and applying it to specific examples can help STEM mentors orient their behavior in ways that can be most helpful going beyond simple issues of trust (e.g., being respectful and fair, being on time, maintaining confidentiality, following through on commitments). In this context, demonstrating trustworthiness may include behaviors such as keeping the mentee's goals and needs paramount in the relationship; benevolence; affirming the accomplishments of mentees; and engagement through frequent supportive academically focused interactions (e.g., discuss ideas for a paper or research project, assist on research project, provide constructive feedback on work, discuss career plans)⁶⁶. Finally, interpersonal trust in mentors may not be sufficient to overcome societal, institutional, or structural barriers to a sense of belonging and competence. Mentors should be aware of ways in which their institution may create or sustain environments that make students in underrepresented groups feel unwelcome or not included.

Communicating Passion for STEM Work and a Sense of Purpose

Because of the research on students from groups underrepresented in STEM endorsing having communal career goals, STEM mentors need training in communicating their personal passion for their work, as well as having a strong sense of purpose. They should not take for granted that mentees know how mentors feel about their work and it is important for them to

share the fact that they find their work deeply fulfilling, positive, and meaningful. In a precollege, summer mentoring program on electrical engineering for high school students, mentees were given experience working together as a team on real-world, hands-on projects related to renewable energy applications, smart grid technologies, and applications to home-based energy-efficient appliances⁶⁷. One main goal of this program is to spark students' creativity and interest in the relevance and need for young people to enter meaningful and rewarding careers in power engineering.

Additional Training for Group Mentoring Programs

When mentors are engaged in a group-mentoring program, training on group leadership skills will be needed in addition to core training on mentoring. For example, training on both interpersonal (e.g., conflict management, identifying strengths in mentees, meeting facilitation) and intrapersonal (e.g., time management, stress management, emotion regulation, adaptability) skills have frequently been implemented by STEM group-mentoring programs^{68,69}. Mentors in one study reported they highly valued that the program helped them develop skills to manage multiple students in a group simultaneously, particularly when the students varied in their ability levels (Banks, 2010).

Training in topics related to group-based mentoring including Tuckman's stages of group development will help mentors understand that group cohesion takes time to develop⁷⁰. Also, after the polite forming stage of group development, there is typically the storming stage where the group may experience a little conflict and limit testing. Group mentors could benefit from understanding that minor degrees of group conflict after the forming stage does not necessarily mean that members need to be moved to another group. In fact, enough time needs to transpire to allow for the group to move beyond the storming stage to the norming stage. Thus, in addition to training on the stages of development of mentoring relationships with an individual mentee, understanding how to form relationships and manage the group as a whole will be an important topic for pre-match training.

Other group mentoring training topics include:

- Managing group dynamics to help resolve conflict;
 - Establishing roles for groups members that are fluid across sessions, so that one person doesn't always serve as the group leader or secretary or other role and;
 - Supporting activity completion by students who have different levels of ability.
- Training in establishing ground rules for the group including confidentiality and providing mutual help to one another;
 - Recognizing when a group member is being excluded or left out and strategies for enhancing inclusion of ostracized members;

Furthermore, for STEM mentoring programs that utilize group mentoring with youth with behavioral challenges, mentors and staff should be trained to be aware of signs that group members are having a negative effect on one another⁷¹. The iatrogenic effects of group interventions that include antisocial youth are well-established and managing the social influence effects of antisocial youth on their peers is very challenging even for highly supervised and trained mental health clinicians⁷². This need is discussed further in the "Monitoring and Support" section.



Photo courtesy of Sea Research Foundation

Mentor Training Needs to Address Lab Safety

The third training benchmark (B.3.3) addresses training mentors in a mentoring program's risk management policies. Because many STEM mentoring programs involve either working in a lab, conducting authentic or canned scientific experiments, or other STEM activities, mentors may need additional training in lab procedures or awareness of being safe and keeping their mentees safe while completing STEM activities.

Mentoring Programs Should Adopt or Adapt, and Then Test, Mentor Training Materials Designed for STEM Mentors

The fourth training benchmark (B.3.4) suggests that mentoring programs use training materials or programs that have been empirically evaluated or that are informed by research in their content. Several curricula have been used in STEM mentoring programs and some have been empirically evaluated. One thing to note is that most STEM mentor training programs have been developed for use with the mentors of undergraduate students for increasing retention in a STEM major or with the mentors or junior faculty. Thus, the mentor training programs described below may inform the development or evaluation of K–12 STEM mentor training programs, but will likely need to be adapted or modified for use with mentors volunteering with a younger age group.

A well-established mentor training program, *Entering Mentoring*, was developed at the University of Wisconsin-Madison as a workshop series for developing skills in mentors and preparing them to participate in effective mentoring relationships^{73,74}.

Topics covered include communication skills, aligning expectations, assessing understanding, addressing diversity, fostering independence, promoting professional development, and articulating a mentoring philosophy and plan. Notably, this program has mentors reflect on “how their own work habits, cognitive styles, attitudes, gender, ethnicity, physical ability, educational background, and nationality differ from that of their mentees and complements readings on stereotypes and unconscious prejudices,” and furthermore, how to overcome cultural biases (p. 473)⁷⁵. Mentors rated the training as being highly useful and interesting. In addition, trained mentors reported discussing student's expectations of the mentor, considering diversity, and asking for advice when faced with a challenge with their mentee more than untrained mentors⁷⁶. Furthermore, mentees reported that trained mentors were more available to and interested in them and gave them more

independence⁷⁷. An adapted version of this program has been evaluated in a randomized controlled trial conducted at 16 academic health centers across the United States. Trained mentors reported that their mentoring skills levels were higher than untrained mentors, particularly in their competencies related to communications, expectations, and professional development, and these gains in mentoring skills were also retrospectively reported by mentees of trained mentors^{78,79}.

Alignment of expectations is a key goal for mentoring relationships⁸⁰ and one of the competencies for which mentors in their training report the highest gains. Training on expectations as well as practical matters and basic topics related to being an effective mentor was also a central part of a three-hour training program for volunteers mentoring Native American and Hispanic elementary and middle school students⁸¹.

Another training program, *Mentoring for Mentors*, lasts two days and is designed for preparing mid-level and senior HIV researchers to learn to be effective leaders and mentors to early stage investigators from underrepresented ethnic and racial minority groups⁸². Mentors reported an increase in self-efficacy related to their mentoring skills as well as greater awareness of the microaggressions and unconscious bias experienced by mentees in underrepresented groups.

A more comprehensive curriculum, informed by research, was developed for use with undergraduate student STEM Ambassadors, who served as informal, near-peer mentors to other undergraduate STEM students⁸³. The training addressed an extensive array of topics related to leadership, teamwork, and professionalism in STEM (e.g., stress and time management, sustaining motivation, dealing with personality differences in the workplace, personal accountability, and creative problem-solving).

Another comprehensive curriculum was developed by Dow Chemical Company and Women in Engineering ProActive Network (WEPAN) that includes general mentoring topics, such as the need for training; goals; benefits to, expectations of, and responsibilities of mentor and mentees; types of relationships; challenges related to stereotypes, biases, and discrimination; navigating both cross-gender and cross-racial mentoring relationships; resources and where to go for help; faculty as mentors and how mentoring is different than advising; and interpersonal communications skills for use in undergraduate

mentoring programs⁸⁴. Despite the fact that this curriculum was developed for college students, it has also been used in STEM mentoring programs conducted in community colleges, high schools, corporations, nonprofit organizations, and state public agencies.

STEM Mentors May Need Supplemental Pre- and Post-match Training Around Communication Skills

The first Training Enhancement (**E.3.1**) suggests that mentors may need additional pre- or post-match training. In the case of STEM mentoring, we recommend training specifically on communication skills that will facilitate close and mutual mentoring relationships, although this may vary based on who is serving in the mentoring role. If mentors do not have training or education in STEM, but are enthusiastic about the topic and want to inspire youth to engage in STEM, then they will need training in how to lead STEM activities and do the “science” aspects of the program in an effective way. A range of competencies have been identified that are needed to be able to effectively lead STEM activities with communication skills being the most frequently identified competency for volunteers, followed by organization, planning, subject matter, and other group leadership skills⁸⁶. Mentors who are not STEM experts, could be so unfamiliar with the activities being conducted that their lack of knowledge and skills could interfere with their being able to focus on getting to know their mentee(s) and their mentoring relationship development. In fact, one program reported that mentees and mentors began quitting the program when mentors weren’t sufficiently competent in leading STEM activities⁸⁷.

On the other hand, mentors who are STEM professionals are likely used to talking about their work with their peers using a highly technical and specific vocabulary. This expertise could be a barrier to relationship development. In fact, much work in STEM is based on a deep body of knowledge and skills that aren’t always understandable to a layperson—especially to a young student. Some mentors who are STEM professionals report worrying about communicating with their mentees about STEM and being understandable (e.g., to middle-school girl mentees)⁸⁸. These mentors may need training in communication skills about discussing their work or communicating instructions in clear, simple language to their mentees.

The scientific method is defined by hypothesis generation and hypothesis testing. Following the scientific method requires being able to think logically and critically, suspend judgment, brainstorm, let data lead, and continuously problem solve, often with others. Thus, mentors need training in how to train, apply, develop, and support these cognitive skills in mentees. One program in our literature search trains mentor and mentees in how to brainstorm with a team of other peers and engage in interactive problem-solving to solve complex engineering problems⁸⁹.

For another example on how a leading STEM mentoring program trains mentors both before and after the match in a variety of critical topics, please see the next page on Genentech’s Futurelab program.



Photo courtesy of Genentech

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Genentech's Futurelab Initiative

GENENTECH'S FUTURELAB INITIATIVE offers all employee mentors extensive training and professional development opportunities throughout the mentors' engagement with Futurelab. Futurelab's first touchpoint with mentors is a 90-minute orientation led by a Futurelab staff member. Mentors are given an overview of the program, including what the mentor role is; what the time commitment looks like; what's expected of mentors in terms of preparation, collaboration, and meeting with co-mentors; attending booster trainings throughout the academic year; and what an ideal engagement looks like with students. The Futurelab team offers a recap of detailed expectations mentors can access throughout the year.

The second component of the orientation is an interactive experience where mentors can hone their relationship-building skills, practice addressing STEM concepts in an age-appropriate manner, and then regroup to discuss and reflect on lessons learned. Mentors are given different situations that commonly arise during mentoring relationships and are asked to practice their responses and reactions. Situations vary from students being discouraged because they're not yet succeeding at designing an effective egg drop vessel, to mentors translating complex STEM concepts into language students of all ages and backgrounds will understand.

The orientation closes with a panel discussion in which teachers and former mentors answer frequently asked questions. This can be anything from what to do if a student doesn't engage, to who to approach when a mentor doesn't understand an aspect of common core math. These interactive activities give mentors a powerful opportunity to prepare for their role by facing real-life situations and discussing questions that may arise in their mentoring relationships.

In 2017, Futurelab piloted booster training opportunities for volunteers. For this pilot, Futurelab partnered with EnCorps STEM Teachers Program—a nonprofit that helps STEM professionals transition careers into teaching in high needs schools—to envision and develop one booster session on Unconscious Bias in the fall and another on Growth Mind-set in the spring. These booster trainings are designed to deepen mentors' engagement with students and enhance their own professional and skills development, delivered by Genentech's Futurelab program team with support from Genentech's Human Resources and EnCorps STEM Teachers Program.





Photo courtesy of Midlands Mentoring Partnership

MENTEE TRAINING

Mentees Need Training Specific to STEM Activities and Careers to be Safe, Credible, and Effective in the Lab, Workplace, or Program

The fourth Training Enhancement (**E.3.4**) suggests that it is also important to provide pre-match training to mentees. In the case of STEM mentoring programs, there are specific topics related to STEM careers or professions that are important in helping to establish a positive relationship with a STEM mentor. Many STEM mentoring programs have discussed the importance of training of mentees and in fact, one review paper discussed a variety of different training models to use with high school STEM mentees including workshops or even weekly instruction⁸⁹. One precollege, summer mentoring program for 11th and 12th grade high school students interested in electrical engineering included mentee training on professional ethics, societies, licensing, and written communication skills⁹⁰. In another example involving a medical mentoring program for high school students focused on exposure to the healthcare profession, they conducted parallel mentor-mentee training in an academic hospital setting⁹¹ on topics such as prerequisite classes needed for attending medical school and career opportunities in healthcare.

The following examples from our literature review provide further ideas around the types of mentee training topics that practitioners in STEM mentoring contexts may consider:

- ▶ An intensive, small summer program for disadvantaged high school students interested in STEM involved working in research labs with a doctoral or postdoctoral mentor⁹². In order to be prepared to work with mentors in an authentic research setting, mentees received extensive training on the professional attitudes, skills, and behaviors essential for being successful in a research lab, such as the importance of organization, time management, meeting deadlines, following directions, problem-solving, interpersonal communication, and teamwork. Training also included learning about the science behind the research projects in the lab. More importantly, students received training in how to think critically as well as how to design and conduct experiments. Students in this program performing significantly below grade level in reading and math at the inception of the program; hence, there was extensive academic training in writing and math to help the students function adequately in the lab. Given the small size of the program, a formal, empirical evaluation was not conducted; however, the majority of the students improved their scientific writing skills and all students reported feeling more confident and competent in writing, a key skill for the STEM workplace. Follow-up results indicated that all

of the students are attending college or planning to attend college, and 60 percent are planning to major in a STEM field.

- ▶ A residential summer science program for high school girls offering engagement in faculty-mentored research projects includes training in career exploration and college admissions counseling⁹³. Training topics in the research immersion experience cover scientific methods, how to do literature reviews, experimental techniques, data analysis, statistics, and presentation skills. Topics in the career exploration training include exposure to a wide range of STEM careers. Training in the college admissions process included information on required coursework, standardized testing, how to search and apply to colleges, essay writing, and mock interviews.
- ▶ Another mentee training curriculum was developed for the PROMoting Geoscience Research, Education, and SuccesS (PROGRESS) mentoring program⁹⁴, based on workshops developed for the Earth Science Women's Network (ESWN)^{95,96}. Weekend workshops were held for undergraduate women STEM majors who were mentees in the PROGRESS program. In this curriculum, mentees were trained in taking a larger role in establishing their own natural mentoring relationships in addition to the assigned mentors they received as part of the program. This perspective is consistent with the idea that science is a collaborative endeavor and that mentees have diverse needs that can best be met by information relationships with a community of mentors⁹⁷. Topics included assessing their networks of mentoring relationships; developing skills in initiating and maintaining relationships with mentors, such as clarifying and managing expectations; and common challenges that women face in STEM undergraduate education to help them cope with gender bias. In addition, students were provided access to a network of potential mentors who were both on and off campus including female role models who had diverse careers in the earth and environmental sciences. Although the training curriculum was not evaluated independent of the mentoring program, the mentoring program was evaluated using a design that included propensity score matching of the intervention group with a similar sample of female STEM students who did not participate in the mentoring program. Among many positive outcomes associated with participation in the program including increased scientific identity, persistence intentions, and deep interest in earth and environmental sciences, mentored students in the program

reported having more mentors than students who were not in the program, suggesting that this training approach enhanced students' social capital.

- ▶ High school graduates who attended a summer bridge STEM mentoring program participated in a hands-on research internship where they attended an orientation meeting introducing them to the program, followed by supplemental group learning activities on topics such as the responsible conduct of research, how to conduct scientific literature reviews, preparing oral and poster presentations, careers in STEM, and networking skills⁹⁸.
- ▶ Another mentee training program, *Entering Research*, developed at the University of Wisconsin, helped undergraduate and graduate STEM students prepare for participating in effective mentoring relationships^{99,100} and taught them how to take a more active role in their relationships with mentors¹⁰¹. Topics included in the training mirror those developed for general mentor training, including communication skills, the importance of aligning expectations, assessing understanding, addressing diversity, fostering independence, promoting professional development, and articulating a mentoring philosophy and plan. Students completed self-ratings of how their scientific confidence, skill, and knowledge increased from completing the training and mentored research experience, and more importantly, reported that the seminar guided them through the process and helped them to find mentors¹⁰².

Mentees Also Need Training to be Safe in Executing STEM Activities or Being in STEM Settings

The fifth Training Enhancement (**E.3.5**) suggests STEM mentoring programs that involve mentees completing STEM activities or conducting research in a STEM laboratory need to provide mentees with training on lab safety. For example, in a summer STEM mentoring program in basic science departments at a medical school, students completed a biosafety training course to be aware of laboratory hazards and how to stay safe in that setting¹⁰³.





PARENT OR GUARDIAN TRAINING

Parents or Guardians Need Training to Support the Mission and Goals of the STEM Program

The sixth Training Enhancement (**E.3.6**) suggests that STEM mentoring programs should provide orientation or training to parent(s) or guardian(s) of children participating in the program. Parental emotional and instrumental support, as well as parental encouragement are considered to be critical for sustaining students' interest and commitment to a STEM career. Because of the central role of parents in supporting mentoring relationships, as well as their critical role related to sustaining interest in STEM, parent engagement and training may enhance the short- and long-term impacts of STEM mentoring programs¹⁰⁴. Sometimes engagement involves direct parent training focused more on the instrumental aspects of the program or having parents attend capstone events. For example, in one program, parents were engaged as both stakeholders and judges giving constructive feedback in a closing ceremony at a precollege summer mentoring program for 11th and 12th grade high school students interested in electrical engineering¹⁰⁵. In other programs, parental engagement may focus on how parents can support the mentoring relationship or further enhance STEM learning by their child.

A key theme in a STEM mentoring program with high school students with a disability was parent involvement¹⁰⁶. Parents reported that the mentoring experience benefited their children in many ways including increasing students' knowledge of STEM careers; goals for and confidence in pursuing STEM; and involvement in career development activities. Interviews with parents, mentors, and mentees revealed the active role that parents played in supporting their children in the mentoring program from helping with STEM activities to debriefing with matches after activities were completed. In fact, many parents were motivated to do more and wanted to support their teens in both the skills they were learning and in their career planning. By having parents openly demonstrate appreciation for the mentor's role in their child's life, both mentors and mentees were more engaged and felt more supported in their matches.

Parents or Guardians Need to be Aware of Risks and Strategies for Keeping Their Children Safe in Executing STEM Activities or Being in STEM Settings

The seventh Training Enhancement (**E.3.7**) suggests that STEM mentoring programs that involve mentees completing STEM activities or conducting research in a STEM laboratory should provide parents or guardians with training on the risks associated with their child participating in the STEM activities. In addition, if parents receive training on lab safety procedures, they can reinforce and support safety policies and procedures with their children.

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2

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

▶ MATCHING AND INITIATION

Program considers the characteristics of the mentor(s) and mentee(s) (e.g., interests, proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches. (B.4.1)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

Based on the goals and target population of the mentoring program, the STEM-specific interests, STEM knowledge, and STEM backgrounds of both mentors and mentees should be taken into consideration when making matches.

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

- Mentoring programs that involve matches working together on long-term or technical projects should prioritize the expressed preferences of the mentor or mentee when making matches.
- Mentoring programs that create mentoring relationships involving one or more mentors and multiple mentees should take into consideration the group dynamics when making matches. (B.4.5 STEM)
- Mentoring programs that create mentoring relationships involving one or more mentors and multiple mentees should consider having a trial period for all group matches that allows for the opportunity to make changes to the group membership, as needed. (E.4.7 STEM)

Justification

Formally matching mentors and mentees is often considered more art than science, with mentoring program practitioners relying on their intuition, as well as logistical, and background characteristics of the mentor and mentee to guide the matching process. This is due, in part, to the overall lack of research examining the matching process in the mentoring field. Similarly, there is a lack of empirical research focused on STEM mentoring programs to guide recommendations for specific practices for creating matches. Thus, the following recommendations are extensions of practices important for all mentoring programs included in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, 4th edition, as well as some additional considerations for matching when the program utilizes a group mentoring approach.

Characteristics to Consider When Making Matches

Perceived similarity between mentor and mentee, which could include dimensions such as demographics, background, personality, as well as interests, has been associated with perceptions of mentoring relationship quality^{1,2} and thus these characteristics should be considered when making matches between mentors and mentees. Matching based on common interests, including STEM-specific interests, has been recommended for STEM mentoring programs based on findings suggesting that when mentoring programs match mentors and mentees with similar interests, the programs have a stronger

impact on youth outcomes³. This is also common practice among mentoring programs, generally⁴.

There are many dimensions of interests that can be considered when making matches, including hobbies, sports, movies, school subjects, movies, and music. STEM-specific interests may include interests regarding a specific STEM field (e.g., biology, climate science, astronomy, chemistry) or interest in learning specific STEM skills (e.g., computer programming, robotics, laboratory skills). There are no empirical studies that have specifically examined the impact of matching on STEM interests on mentoring relationship quality or youth outcomes, but this practice is mentioned as a matching criteria in evaluation studies of individual mentoring programs⁵. The prioritization of a mentee's STEM interests, STEM knowledge, and STEM background when making matches will depend on the goals and target population of the program. For instance, the prioritization of STEM specific interests may be more important for older mentees who have thought about their career goals and are beginning to prepare for post-secondary education. In addition to STEM specific interests, STEM knowledge and background may be particularly relevant when making matches in programs where mentors and mentees will be working together on projects that require specific skills. For example, matching a mentee with a mentor who will be working together on a biology project may require that the mentee have knowledge and proficiency in how

to use a microscope in order to meaningfully contribute to the shared project.

Alternatively, some programs may intentionally match youth across different areas of STEM interest—such as pairing a student who is interested in chemistry with an engineer—to broaden the youth’s exposure to other scientific disciplines they may not have considered. This may be particularly important for girls as they often steer away from male-dominated fields such as engineering or computer science, but may be encouraged to consider those fields based on exposure to mentors. Regardless of whether a program does same- or cross-discipline matching, information about mentees’ STEM specific interests, knowledge, and background should be obtained during the screening process so this information can inform matching decisions (see the “Screening” section for a more detailed discussion of how to screen for the requisite skills in STEM mentoring programs).

Considering mentee and mentor demographic characteristics such as gender, race, ethnicity, and disability status when making matches is included in Benchmark practice **B.4.1** of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, 4th edition. Research comparing mentoring relationship and mentee outcomes for same gender, race, or ethnicity matches vs. cross-gender, race, or ethnicity matches has found few, if any differences between these matches^{6,7,8}. Similar effects have been noted in research on STEM mentoring programs. For example, when comparing STEM outcomes (e.g., STEM-related knowledge, engagement, confidence, and career planning) following participation in a STEM mentoring program for high school students with disabilities, there were no differences in outcomes when comparing mentees who had a mentor with a disability and mentees whose mentor did not have a disability⁹. In another evaluation of a STEM mentoring program for African-American STEM undergraduates, mentee-perceived similarity with their mentor was more important for perceptions of mentoring relationship quality than gender or racial similarity¹⁰. Relationship quality was, in turn, associated with greater feelings of commitment to a STEM-career by mentees¹¹. These findings suggest that factors other than matching on demographic characteristics alone may be more important for creating close, effective mentoring relationships in STEM mentoring programs.

While matching based on demographics may not be necessary for many STEM mentoring programs, the prioritization of demographic characteristics when matching could be important

based on the goals and target population of the program. For example, if a mentoring program has a specific goal of providing mentees who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields with a mentor who can help the mentee prepare for and navigate the potential challenges of pursuing a STEM career that are associated with their demographic characteristics, then relevant characteristics should be given greater weight when making matching decisions. Anecdotally, Black doctoral engineering students reported that having faculty and administrators who are similar to them serves as an example of what they could achieve and that having a faculty mentor with a similar racial identity enhanced the mentoring relationship¹². Additionally, mentees in a STEM mentoring program for high school students with a disability reported that having a mentor with a similar disability was important to them and was more likely to lead to discussions with their mentor about navigating the additional challenges associated with having a disability when pursuing STEM careers and education¹³.

PREFERENCES OF MENTEES AND MENTORS

In addition to the goals and target population of the STEM mentoring program, the expressed preferences of mentees regarding the background and characteristics of their mentor appears to be an important factor for determining how much weight to give characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, or social class when making matches. For example, college students in an online STEM mentoring program reported that it was important to them to have a mentor who was similar to them in terms of gender and race, this was especially true for women and students of color¹⁴. When students had a mentor similar to them in terms of race or gender, they reported that they received more help; however, mentees matched with a mentor of similar gender or race did not have better academic outcomes when compared to mentees whose mentor was not similar to them in race or gender¹⁵. In another study, mentees in a STEM mentoring program who reported that it was important to them to have a mentor with a similar background (i.e., similar ethnicity, gender, or social class) and reported they received mentoring through the program from one or more mentors who shared their background, demonstrated increased feelings of belonging and identity as a science student¹⁶.

Mentor preferences may be particularly important to consider in programs in which matches work together on a specific research project. Mentors who will be formally supervising mentees in





STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: New York City Science Mentoring Consortium

THE NEW YORK CITY SCIENCE RESEARCH MENTORING CONSORTIUM is a group of academic, research, and cultural institutions that place NYC high school students in laboratories and other authentic STEM environments for mentored research experiences. Mentees are embedded in the mentor's workplace and contribute to real research projects, so it's especially important that matches are made with care and finesse. Mentors must feel confident in how a mentee's work ethic, strengths, and personality will integrate into the already-existing team dynamic, and mentees must feel comfortable with the research they'll be contributing to and the lab environment they'll be entering.

Many programs within the Consortium facilitate a pre-match meeting so that mentors and mentees can familiarize themselves with each other and help inform the matching process. Programs do this in a variety of ways—some programs host a casual networking event, where mentors and mentees can mingle to learn about each other's work and interests. Other programs host a more structured event—especially when it's a larger program with many students and labs—where mentees receive descriptions of each lab beforehand and identify several they'd like to meet during the event. The mentees rotate around the room and briefly meet mentors from each of their selections. Mentors and mentees use these events to consider who they'd like to be matched with. Mentors' notes may include reflections about whether the mentee expressed interest in a specific research project, whether the mentee would fit into the lab's culture (e.g., a loquacious student may not fit in well with a quiet lab), and whether the mentee seemed to understand the lab's project. Mentees are occasionally asked to continue working in the lab after the program concludes, so mentors want to select and invest in mentees who have the potential to contribute to the lab long-term. This initial meeting also gives mentors an opportunity to set realistic expectations for the mentoring experience. Science sometimes requires repetitive work, and mentors want to accurately convey the internship experience so mentees don't select opportunities they're not truly interested in.

After mentors and mentees meet, both share their notes and preferences with the Program Coordinator. The Program Coordinator considers this input, along with applications, interviews, and required coursework, when making the match.

completing a project may even specify a set of criteria for type of mentee who would be best suited to work on the project, or they may be involved in the matching process by reviewing potential mentees and ranking their preferences based on information about the mentee provided by the mentoring program (e.g., STEM interests, knowledge, and skills).

For a real-life example of a STEM mentoring program that gives mentors and mentees a chance to meet each other and see if there is alignment of interests and personalities, see the previous page about the work of the New York City Science Research Mentoring Consortium.

Whether mentoring programs decide to prioritize matching based on interests, demographics, expressed preferences, or other similarities, the goals and target population of the program should inform these decisions and matching must be done in a thoughtful, intentional manner, following established procedures, and informed by information gathered during the screening process.

GROUP MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS

The consideration of mentoring relationships among one or more mentors and multiple mentees, referred to as group mentoring, has not been included in the previous version of the Elements and thus there are currently no benchmarks or enhancements specific to this type of mentoring. Based on a review of the literature^{17,18,19} and consultation with the Working Group of STEM practitioners, it is clear that group mentoring is frequently utilized in STEM mentoring programs. There are currently no empirical studies examining specific matching practices for group mentoring programs; however, the concept of group cohesion has been proposed as an important factor in contributing to the success of group mentoring relationships²⁰. For group mentoring programs, the complimentary and competing personalities, interests, backgrounds, goals, skills, knowledge, strengths, and previous experiences of the individuals within the group create additional layers of complexity when making matches. Program staff must take into consideration mentor-to-group, mentee-to-mentee, and possibly mentor-to-mentor dynamics.

Within the child and adolescent group psychotherapy literatures, one concern has been the possibility that grouping individuals with behavioral problems together can contribute to even more

deviant behavior²¹—meaning programs that utilize a group mentoring approach and that work with youth who have behavioral problems should carefully consider how to group these individuals together when making matches. For instance, limiting the number of individuals within a group with externalizing behavior problems can reduce the likelihood of contributing to negative outcomes among group members²². The skills, training, and experience of the mentor in managing group dynamics will also be important when making group matches, particularly if the group includes mentees with known behavioral challenges. *See the “Training” section for additional details.*

Finally, given the complexity of making group matches, it has been suggested that mentoring programs using a group approach should consider having a brief trial period at the beginning of the program during which mentoring program leaders can observe the groups, obtain feedback from group members, and make adjustments in order create the most optimal group composition. If programs choose to take this approach, it must be done thoughtfully. Before making groups, it must be communicated to all program participants that there will be a set amount of time at the beginning of the program that will allow for everyone to get to know one another and that changes to the groups might be made based on expressed preferences and interests of the participants. Both mentors and mentees should be privately asked about their feelings of comfort with their group and whether their group assignment is meeting their needs and goals. If group assignments are modified at the beginning of the program, program staff must ensure that this is done in a way that is sensitive to the feelings of all the group members in order to avoid feelings of shame at being singled out and moved to a different group, regardless of the reasons for this decision. For a real-life example of this kind of “trial run” group matching in action, please see the case study on the next page on the approach of Sea Research Foundation.

Creating matches in STEM mentoring programs requires a few additional considerations and the extent to which these recommendations are relevant to a specific program will depend, in part, on the goals and target population. Following these evidence- and practice-based recommendations for matching are expected to help improve the likelihood of creating close and enduring mentoring relationships.





Photo courtesy of Sea Research Foundation

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Sea Research Foundation

STEM MENTORING is a group mentoring program that matches mentors with four mentees each. In the first years of the program, Program Coordinators occasionally reported having difficulty creating flourishing and long-lasting matches that engaged all participants; sometimes the five different personalities wouldn't complement each other as intended, but rather would create unexpected group dynamics that left mentees feeling more frustrated than excited. Program Coordinators would do their best to use the STEM Mentoring applications, interviews, and their own intuition to create groups that worked on paper, but they didn't always translate well to real life. Once groups were established, mentors and mentees would complete three modules together that each lasted 8–12 weeks. Program Coordinators were often reluctant to modify groups midway through the program because putting mentees into new groups could disrupt the dynamics, relationships, and routine of multiple groups—that is, any groups that mentees moved from along with the groups they moved to would have to reestablish group norms.

For the reasons above, STEM Mentoring decided to develop a new curriculum to assist Program Coordinators in “testing the matches” before solidifying groups for the program's duration. The curriculum consists of a four-week mini-module that takes place before the first full-length module begins. Program Coordinators create groups for this mini-module with the expectation that participants may shift and reconfigure before the formal program begins. If groups work well, they can remain together for the remaining three modules; however, if negative group dynamics distract participants from the STEM activities and/or impede positive relationship building among mentees and their mentors, the Program Coordinator can reconfigure the groups before the first full-length module begins. The mini-module is long enough that groups have a good chance to work through issues and find their momentum, but not so long that group members have to spend too much time in matches that may not be ideal.

After the mini-module concludes, Program Coordinators assess how the groups collaborated and have the opportunity to reconfigure the groups, if necessary. Program Coordinators may find that a mentor needs to be reassigned to a less rambunctious group, or that a mentee needs to be with a group that challenges her more. STEM Mentoring hopes that having a designated time to make these changes will set appropriate expectations for the groups' duration and prepare mentors and mentees for successful long-term matches.



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2

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

▶ MONITORING AND SUPPORT

MONITORING AND SUPPORT

At each mentor monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentors about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure. (B.5.2)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

When the mentoring program includes structured STEM activities, program staff should ask about the mentor's experience in completing the activities with his or her mentee(s) during the mentor monitoring contact.

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

When the mentoring program has goals that include influencing mentees' attitudes, beliefs, skills, and plans regarding STEM, mentoring program staff should ask mentors about these outcomes during the mentor monitoring contact.

At each mentee monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentees about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure. (B.5.3)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

When the mentoring program includes structured STEM activities, program staff should ask about the mentee's experience in completing the activities with his or her mentor(s) during the mentee monitoring contact.

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

When the mentoring program has goals that include influencing mentees' attitudes, beliefs, skills, and plans regarding STEM, mentoring program staff should ask mentees about these outcomes during the mentee monitoring contact.

At each monitoring contact with a responsible adult in the mentee's life, program asks about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure. (B.5.6)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

When the mentoring program has goals that include influencing mentees' attitudes, beliefs, skills, and plans regarding STEM, mentoring program staff should ask

the responsible adult about these outcomes during the monitoring contact.

Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise. (B.5.9)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

When the program includes structured STEM activities, mentors should be given access to resources that will help them complete these activities with their mentee(s) and deepen their knowledge about these activities.

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

Mentors should be given access to resources to help foster mentees' identity as a STEM student or employee, and sense of belonging in a STEM field.

Program provides mentees and parents or guardians with access or referrals to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, available social service referrals) to help families address needs and challenges as they arise. (B.5.10)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

Programs should provide access to STEM-related resources and referrals for needs and challenges of mentees and families that are beyond the scope and services of the mentoring program.

Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training. (B.5.11)

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

Mentors should receive training on how to help foster mentees' STEM-related self-efficacy, identity, and belonging.

► STEM RECOMMENDATION

Mentors should receive ongoing training on how to help mentees prepare for marginalizing experiences they may face in pursuing STEM education and careers.

When mentoring activities take place in the presence of mentoring program staff, program staff should provide real-time monitoring and support of mentoring activities and group dynamics to help support mentors and mentees in completing STEM activities and help mentors manage the dynamics of their mentoring relationship(s). (B.5.13 STEM)

Justification

Once matches are created and established, the main task of mentoring program staff becomes monitoring and supporting matches as they begin the process of getting to know one another and developing their relationship. High-quality monitoring and support practices help prevent premature closure of mentoring relationships and promote higher quality mentoring relationships. STEM mentoring programs should adhere to all of the monitoring and support practices outlined in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, 4th edition, when applicable. In addition, STEM mentoring programs have some additional considerations related to these practices, including one new Benchmark practice detailed later in the chapter (B.5.13). Because there is very little research within the area of STEM mentoring, most of the following recommendations are based on practices suggested by this project's Working Group.

Match Contacts

STEM mentoring programs frequently incorporate structured STEM experiments and learning opportunities into the mentoring relationship as the primary activities that mentors and mentees engage in when they are together for their mentoring meetings^{1,2,3,4}. These activities may include a specific curriculum or activities created by program staff that are responsive to the interests and goals of program participants as well as long-term STEM-related projects that take more than one session to complete. Regardless of what form the activities take, if mentors and mentees are expected to engage in structured STEM activities, mentoring program staff should take time at each check-in (**B.5.2, B.5.3, B.5.6**) to ask mentors and mentees about their experiences in engaging in these activities together. These check-ins should include asking about their successes, challenges, and lessons learned from the activities. Program staff may consider asking mentors about what they observed their mentee learning from the activity, mentee level of engagement with the activity, and whether the activity highlighted any specific strengths or areas that need improvement.

For a real-life example of how mentor check-ins can boost the quality of a program's implementation, see the sidebar on the next page on Genentech's mentor check-in procedures and the value they bring to their work.

An additional set of topics that should be addressed during match monitoring contacts is assessing mentees' attitudes, beliefs, skills, and plans regarding STEM, particularly if a goal of the mentoring program is to influence these outcomes in mentees. Evaluations of STEM mentoring programs have demonstrated impacts on these types of outcomes for mentees who participate in the program^{5,6,7}. Attitudes may include topics such as how excited the mentee is about STEM, beliefs are topics such as the mentee's feelings of belonging in STEM, skills include their actual abilities in completing STEM activities or feelings of confidence in specific STEM skills, and plans regarding STEM refers to the mentee's intentions to pursue STEM coursework or career. Mentors, mentees, and the responsible adult contact should all be asked to comment on these areas.

Not all of these topics must be assessed during each monitoring contact but they should be assessed regularly and in a systematic way. For example, standardized questions or brief surveys can be utilized to assess these ideas from the perspective of each person involved in the match. The information gathered through the match monitoring contacts should inform the additional support and resources provided by the program to mentees and mentors.

Provision of Stem-Related Resources and Referrals

In addition to providing mentees and parents or guardians with support through access to resources or referrals, STEM mentoring programs should also be able to provide additional STEM-related resources or make STEM-related referrals to extend support to mentees and their parents or caregivers beyond the context of the mentoring program. For example, tutoring in STEM subject areas is often beyond the scope of most STEM mentoring programs. If the mentee, parent or guardian, mentor, or mentoring program staff recognize that a mentee needs supplemental instruction in a STEM topic in order to help the mentee achieve his or her potential, then the program should be aware of resources that are available and help connect mentees and their parents or guardians to these resources. As another example, mentees who are ready to apply for college and have an interest in a STEM career may need additional support in determining where to apply and how to obtain financial and social support⁸. This expertise is likely beyond the abilities of most mentors and mentoring programs and thus programs that serve this population should be prepared to make referrals to other individuals or programs who can assist mentees with this and other similar areas of need.





Photo courtesy of Genentech

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Genentech's Futurelab Initiative

GENENTECH'S **FUTURELAB** program keeps mentors engaged and informed through regular and ongoing email communication. Every few weeks, Futurelab's volunteer management team (comprised of employee volunteers) and team captains create and distribute a different newsletter for each of Futurelab's three distinct programs. Some newsletters provide a preview of the next week's lesson to help mentors feel prepared for the upcoming activity. Other newsletters focus on relationship development and explore strategies to foster a connection in the context of the program; for example, asking students how their day was before jumping right into homework or a STEM activity.

These communications are especially important for Futurelab's mentors who are embedded in a South San Francisco classroom. Teachers don't always have time to provide comprehensive instructions for how mentors can contribute to the classroom, so newsletters can prepare mentors by describing the activity and the mentor's role and responsibilities. If the next week's activity is an egg drop, the newsletter may contain information about how the mentor can assist the teacher in scoring the competition. After reading these newsletters, mentors are better equipped to contribute to the classroom and feel more confident about their role supporting students and teachers.

Regular communications to volunteers ensures that they're working effectively and have the support they need. Team Captains are also expected to check in with their members through face-to-face meetups and report back to program staff on volunteer morale, attendance, and engagement. Volunteers are given a sense of community as they share the responsibility and the reward of being a Futurelab mentor. Volunteers can check in with each other and help one another.

Ongoing Training Topics

As described previously, STEM mentors often have an additional task promoting mentees' self-efficacy, identity, and feelings of belonging in STEM pursuits as these attitudes and beliefs are thought to underlie an individual's intentions and behaviors in the pursuit of STEM education and career goals^{9,10,11}. Mentors should receive ongoing training (**B.5.11**) in how to address these outcomes within the context of a mentoring relationship, particularly if information gathered during the match monitoring contacts indicate that this is an issue in the mentoring relationship. In addition, many STEM mentoring programs aim to target youth who are traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields and thus mentors may need additional ongoing training in how to help mentees prepare for challenges they face in pursuing a STEM education or career.

Real-time Monitoring and Support

Site-based STEM mentoring programs have a unique opportunity to observe in real-time the interactions of mentors and mentees and should take advantage of this opportunity to provide immediate monitoring and support, as needed (**new Benchmark 5.13**). This includes supporting matches who are working together on STEM activities and supporting matches in navigating the dynamics of their relationship. Real-time monitoring in STEM mentoring programs helps ensure that critical messages or lessons are delivered accurately by mentors in programs that include structured STEM activities. In order to provide the most effective monitoring, program staff should be familiar with the principles of cooperative learning and play an active role while the groups work together on an activity or engage in their mentoring relationship, by moving throughout the room, using reflective listening, and giving constructive feedback¹². Asking questions of the group, as well as privately asking questions of individuals within the group, can give program staff information about how things are going in regards to both the planned activities and the mentoring relationship or group dynamics.

In addition, there are many dimensions of group dynamics that program staff should be aware of in order to effectively observe and supervise group mentoring relationships, including group cohesion, power dynamics, engagement of individuals in the group, feelings of emotional safety, and trust within the group. Group development is theorized to include distinct stages: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning¹³. Mentoring program staff who are aware of these normal group

processes and know what to look for can help prepare mentors and mentees for the expected changes and challenges within the group. Based on the information gathered during their observations of the activities and interactions of mentors and mentees, program staff should provide additional support or resources to address any challenges associated with the mentoring activities as well as the match or group dynamics.

For a great real-life example of how one STEM mentoring program does this kind of real-time monitoring and support of matches, please see the case study on the next page on the work of Science Club. STEM Mentoring in Action: Science Club

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For a great real-life example of how one STEM mentoring program does this kind of real-time monitoring and support of matches, please see the case study on the next page on the work of Science Club.



Photo Courtesy of Northwestern/Science in Society

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: SCIENCE CLUB

SCIENCE CLUB, an after-school STEM mentoring program for middle school students, has found that providing groups with real-time, in-person monitoring and support is critical to fostering long-lasting mentoring relationships, youth STEM competencies, and mentor skills.

For most Science Club mentors, this is their first experience working with middle school youth at a community site. The group- and STEM-discipline-based nature of Science Club presents extra challenges, compared to a one-to-one mentoring program. These include managing group dynamics/behavior, safety, flexibility in allowing students to work semi-independently, and ensuring enough time for one-on-one conversations with youth about issues of interest or concern.

Science Club's Program Coordinator plays a central role in this support. This person's professional background includes experience with youth development and STEM education. During each Science Club session, the program coordinator actively monitors the groups and moves throughout the room as conditions dictate. If the staff member sees a group that seems offtrack, or a mentor signals for support, the program coordinator will approach the table to check in and help navigate the situation.

Because staff members are more seasoned with informal STEM pedagogy, they can model productive discussions on how to unpack students' passions and empower them to pursue projects in a way that is safe, aligned with their abilities, and grounded in their own interests. This extra support, often just a light touch, allows groups to quickly resolve small issues, with mentors receiving real-time support in how to manage particular situations without halting their groups to problem-solve every time they encounter a challenge. Post-club debriefs may also take place, depending on mentor needs.

Having a staff member in the room also allows Science Club to more accurately assess which groups are doing well and which are in need of extra support. Some mentors join the program with high expectations of what they'll accomplish and the relationships they'll develop in a short amount of time; the mentoring experience is often more difficult than mentors anticipated, however, and it can take longer for relationships to become established. Because the program coordinator monitors each group on a regular basis, it is easier to pick up on subtle cues that a mentor is having an impact. For example, the staff member might notice that a student makes eye contact more than he did previously, or that a student goes straight to her mentor upon entering the room instead of chatting with other students. Staff can communicate these observations and reassure mentors of their progress in building relationships, which motivates mentors to persist during the often-challenging first six months.





2

STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR STEM MENTORING PROGRAMS

▶ **CLOSURE**

At the conclusion of the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship, program explores the opportunity with mentors, mentees, and (when relevant) parents or guardians to continue the match for an additional period of time. (E.6.1)

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

Based upon mentees' ages, parent permission, program goals, and company rules (for workplace or work-sponsored mentoring programs), mentoring relationships may continue after the conclusion of the program.

Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees, when relevant, to mark progress and transition or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship. (E.6.2)

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

STEM mentoring programs that include completing long-term projects such as scientific experiments could host a final celebration that provides a forum for mentees to showcase their work or findings. This final event could mirror a scientific conference or presentation that provides mentees with an authentic mastery experience that is directly related to being in a STEM career.

Program staff members provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives. (E.6.3)

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

If one of the program goals is to help mentees build a network of STEM professionals, the program and mentor may introduce or connect (either in person or virtually) mentees to other potential helpers and mentors who are STEM professionals.

► **STEM RECOMMENDATION**

Time-limited STEM mentoring programs may consider networking with other mentoring programs, so that when the program ends, mentees will be able to continue to receive additional mentoring services. In addition, prior to relationship closure, STEM mentoring programs should consider training mentees in the lifelong skills of being able to locate, identify, initiate, and maintain new mentoring relationships with caring adults in their lives to address the ongoing needs for support as youth enter a STEM education or STEM career.

Justification

All mentoring programs need to have policies and procedures in place for handling mentoring relationship closure. Benchmark practices for match closure described in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* suggest that these should be designed and consistently implemented for handling both anticipated and unanticipated relationship closures. The recommendations included in this STEM supplement speak primarily to recommendations for handling anticipated match closures. There were no supplemental recommendations for how programs might manage unanticipated match closures over and above those currently described in the *Elements*.

Despite the importance of closure for mentee outcomes, even the broader literature on youth mentoring provides little guidance about specific practices for effectively managing the relationship

closure process. The literature on STEM mentoring programs is no exception and there were few studies that we located which discussed a program's relationship closure practices at all—and no studies that actually tested the effectiveness of any specific closure practices.

The lack of discussion of closure practices in the literature on STEM mentoring may be because STEM mentoring programs may not realize the importance of having closure procedures in place and the potential deleterious effects of both premature relationship closure or the use of ineffective closure procedures. Some possible explanations are described below.

- A small percentage of mentoring programs are located in **workplace settings** (i.e., where youth come to the worksite during the school day or after school)—about 6 percent of all



mentoring programs based on one national survey¹. Many STEM companies and institutions of higher education sponsor STEM mentoring programs for youth because of their interest in contributing to the growth of the workforce, particularly of underrepresented groups. Notably, mentoring relationships located in workplace settings may have lower rates of premature closure than mentoring that occurs in other locations² suggesting that these types of programs and locations may have increased promise for positive outcomes. Staff members may not perceive premature relationship closure as a problem, because premature closure is relatively less common in workplace mentoring programs than in other settings. Workplace STEM mentoring programs tend to be more structured and less demanding in terms of their duration, frequency, and length, which may result in these lower rates of premature closure³. Even though rates of premature closure may be lower in workplace settings, they still need closure procedures to handle the variety of reasons matches may end early.

► Many STEM mentoring programs are **curriculum- or project-based**. In these types of programs, relationships often are designed to close when the curriculum ends or a project is completed unlike open-ended, one-to-one, community-based mentoring relationships. Because the STEM program has pre-defined the ending of the relationship, staff may believe that relationship closure has implicitly been handled. However, even in this context, there needs to be procedures in place to support healthy and productive match closures—for example, in programs using a curriculum that has a match where one member ends the relationship prematurely. In this case, the mentee would probably not have completed the curriculum or project. Having an incomplete experience could also have an adverse effect on the mentee's feelings of competence and efficacy, in addition to the generally negative outcomes associated with premature relationship closure (e.g., feelings of abandonment, rejection, anxiety, anger, confusion, sadness)^{4,5,6}. Programs need to consider a variety of options for how they will handle this type of closure such as whether they would re-match the mentee with a new mentor or even a staff member so the mentee can complete the curriculum or finish the project. Note that findings on the impact of re-matching are mixed suggesting it can have negative effects on youth⁷ unless the new relationship becomes close relatively quickly, which appears to mitigate against the negative effects of re-matching⁸.

► Because many STEM mentoring programs are **group-based**, the end of the program may be well-defined or time-limited (e.g., summer camp, academic school). Yet despite there being both a clear beginning and end date to the relationship, additional closure procedures are still needed for these groups. For example, if one mentee stops coming to the group meetings, the situation may not feel like closure, because there are still ongoing relationships between the mentor and other mentees in the group. However, this situation still constitutes closure for the specific mentee, their mentor, and for the other group members so they can say goodbye to the departing youth. The program needs to have procedures in place for directly addressing this type of premature termination to manage its impact on everyone in the group.

Thus, well-developed relationship closure policies aligned with the *Elements* benchmarks are needed and core to the effective functioning of all mentoring programs. Notably, unlike the empirical research reported on premature closure rates in general mentoring programs that are as high as 38 percent of relationships⁹, research on the prevalence of premature closure in STEM mentoring programs is largely absent from the literature. In addition, research on the predictors, prevention, and treatment of premature relationship closure in STEM mentoring programs is also not reported. These are all important directions for future research to inform the development of STEM program practices and policies. Nonetheless, practice experience and related literatures provide some guidance for recommendations for managing anticipated closure practices in STEM mentoring programs that may enhance the impact of the program on participating mentees and these recommendations are described on the next page.

Relationship Continuation

The program **Enhancement 6.1** suggests that as the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship comes to a close, the mentoring program could explore the possibility with mentors, mentees, and (when relevant) parents or guardians for the match to continue. This enhancement was originally introduced to the *Elements* in order to provide recommendations to mentoring programs that have a defined end date or end when mentees turn 18, but where the match members would like to continue their mentoring relationship.

Because of the long-term needs for advice and support for successful integration into a STEM career, one program recommendation is that STEM mentoring programs consider allowing their matches **to continue contact** with one another after the program ends. This decision should be informed by several factors described below.

- First, the **age** of the mentees is important to consider. For mentees who are under 18 or who may have an intellectual disability, or some other characteristic that could impair making an informed decision or protecting their own safety, receipt of **parent permission** in advance is critical regarding allowing ongoing contact between match members.
- The **goals of the program** should also be considered:
 - *Initial recruitment into STEM*: For example, for programs designed to recruit young mentees into a STEM field and that are mostly focused on designing fun and engaging STEM activities with a mentor who is acting as a positive role model and friend, ongoing contact may be less important. This type of program may meet its goals if it has piqued the interest of its mentees and then, subsequent STEM programs might focus on developing deeper mentoring relationships.
 - *Retention in STEM*: For programs designed to recruit or retain older mentees who have already expressed interest in a STEM field, a more enduring relationship with a STEM mentor may be more relevant to facilitate to help sustain mentees' interests over time and help mentees cope with educational and career challenges, open opportunities, and inform decision-making.
- Because many STEM programs are sponsored by STEM companies or academic STEM departments located in institutions of higher education, the **rules** for employees, faculty, or postdoctoral, graduate, or undergraduate students for that workplace should be considered. These policies may permit or prohibit contact with mentees outside of the program structure.

There are a few STEM mentoring programs that have reported their strategies for encouraging or supporting relationship continuation. For example, one summer camp STEM program for high school students using faculty and near-peer mentors reported that the program continued contact with mentees after the camp ended through email correspondence¹⁰. The program reported they regularly updated their website to add notices of related resources for mentees. In addition, some matches

continued contact with one another, particularly using social media platforms to continue to build and strengthen their relationships. In a similar vein, some members of our Working Group noted that they encourage or help mentees to build a profile on LinkedIn. Furthermore, mentors and mentees were encouraged to connect with one another on LinkedIn, so that mentees could have ongoing educational- and career-related support from their mentors, while getting help building their professional networks.

Final Celebration and Participation in Authentic STEM-Related Events

Program **Enhancement 6.2** suggests that mentoring programs host a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees to mark progress, transition, or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship. This enhancement is particularly relevant for most STEM mentoring programs, particularly those where mentees complete long-term projects such as conducting scientific experiments or building a product or piece of equipment. Relationships that end well can have far-reaching positive effects on youth¹¹; furthermore, when mentees are engaged in the planning of the final celebration or graduation ceremony, it can help to give them some control over the closure process¹². Thus, a strong recommendation is for STEM mentoring programs to construct a final celebration that is planned, at least in part, by mentees. The experience can provide mentees with a forum to showcase their work or findings, and an opportunity to end their mentoring relationship in a healthy and joyous way.

Because research suggests that STEM programs aimed at recruitment and retention that reflect **authentic STEM activities** have stronger outcomes¹³, having a STEM program culminate in an event that mirrors what STEM professionals might do in their careers could provide an effective means of closing the program and the relationship. Activities that reflect the work actually done by STEM professions will vary based upon the discipline. Some examples we located include:

- Mentees might work as part of an existing team or lab on an ongoing research project¹⁴.
- Mentees engaged with research scientists would likely learn the scientific method, and then, design and conduct empirical research projects^{15,16,17}.
- Mentees matched with engineers or applications developers might program a software application or design and build a device, such as in a robotics camp^{18,19,20}.



These types of final events may be designed for mentees to have an authentic mastery experience that is directly related to being in a particular kind of STEM career. Several STEM mentoring organizations have reported a variety of different ways that they have constructed this type of authentic scientific activity:

- Some report having participants present their research findings, products, or projects in local, national, or international **competitions** (we found examples involving K–12 students,^{21,22} as well as college students, including in international contexts²³).
- Others utilize more of a mini-conference approach where mentees present their projects in a **poster** format (college)²⁴, or in **an oral report, demonstration, or game** presented to peers, mentors, or other experts in the field, or family members in both elementary²⁵ and high school programs²⁶.
- For programs that chose to include participation in competitions, particularly ones that may be expensive to attend because they involve entrance fees and travel, the mentors have often collaborated with their mentees on **fundraising activities**²⁷. Fundraising can be considered an authentic STEM activity as well, since STEM professionals regularly have to engage in these types of entrepreneurial activities (e.g., apply to external funders for grants or contracts) to support their work. By presenting their projects to potential donors, mentees get opportunities to develop their communications skills, get practice in pitching their ideas to interested laypeople, and consequently, can further develop their self-confidence and sense of belonging in a STEM field.

For a great real-life example of how one program maximizes these “capstone” style presentations into a celebration event, see the case study on the next page on the work of Sea Research Foundation.

Connect mentees to others in STEM fields

What is remarkable in the STEM literature is that, unfortunately, STEM mentoring programs cannot “rest easy” after they have sparked an interest in STEM. Support of someone into a STEM career may be a lifelong journey particularly for supporting the career development of youth and adults from underrepresented groups. Interest is only the first step and needs to be reinforced, grown, nurtured, and supported across development. The choice to pursue a STEM major or career, particularly one at an expert level, requires attention and resources. Each organizational context will present STEM mentees with new challenges to

overcome and mentoring can be a means of supporting this process. For these reasons, mentoring programs, regardless of the target age group, should consider forming a consortium of programs and services that support the development of a STEM professional across adolescence and well into adulthood.

Program **Enhancement 6.3** suggests that mentoring program staff members should provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.

This enhancement in the *Elements* was included based on a growing literature on the importance of natural mentors in people’s lives^{28,29,30} and could provide a bridge to future types of support for mentees whose formal mentoring relationships were ending. There are three recommendations that build upon this general enhanced practice:

- **Connect mentees to other STEM professionals**
Given the ongoing need for mentoring for young people interested in entering a STEM major or career, a strong recommendation is to help mentees build a network of STEM professionals that can deepen and grow across time. Specifically, the mentoring program and the mentor may introduce or connect mentees to other potential helpers and mentors who are STEM professionals. These introductions can be conducted either in person or virtually with the idea of growing mentee’s social capital which is often underdeveloped in the networks of students in underrepresented groups. For example, using LinkedIn as a professional networking device both within the program and for connecting mentees to other STEM professionals for education or career advice or opportunities could be an effective strategy to help achieve this goal.
- **Network your STEM mentoring program with other STEM mentoring programs**
An additional recommendation for STEM programs, particularly those that are time-limited, is for the program itself to network with other STEM mentoring programs. That way, when the program ends, mentees will still be able to receive mentoring services and/or participate in more advanced or ongoing STEM programs.





Photo courtesy of Sea Research Foundation

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Sea Research Foundation

SEA RESEARCH FOUNDATION'S STEM MENTORING PROGRAM CONCLUDES EACH YEAR WITH A GRADUATION event that brings mentees, mentors, program staff, and family members together to celebrate the year. Everyone is invited to the program site, where participants share what they've learned and watch a slideshow of photos. The graduation takes place after all the curriculum modules have been completed, so sites are able to put mentees' STEM projects from various curricula on display to demonstrate what they've created. The graduation event is sometimes the first opportunity families get to see what mentees and mentors have worked on, and mentees are often quite proud to share what they've accomplished.

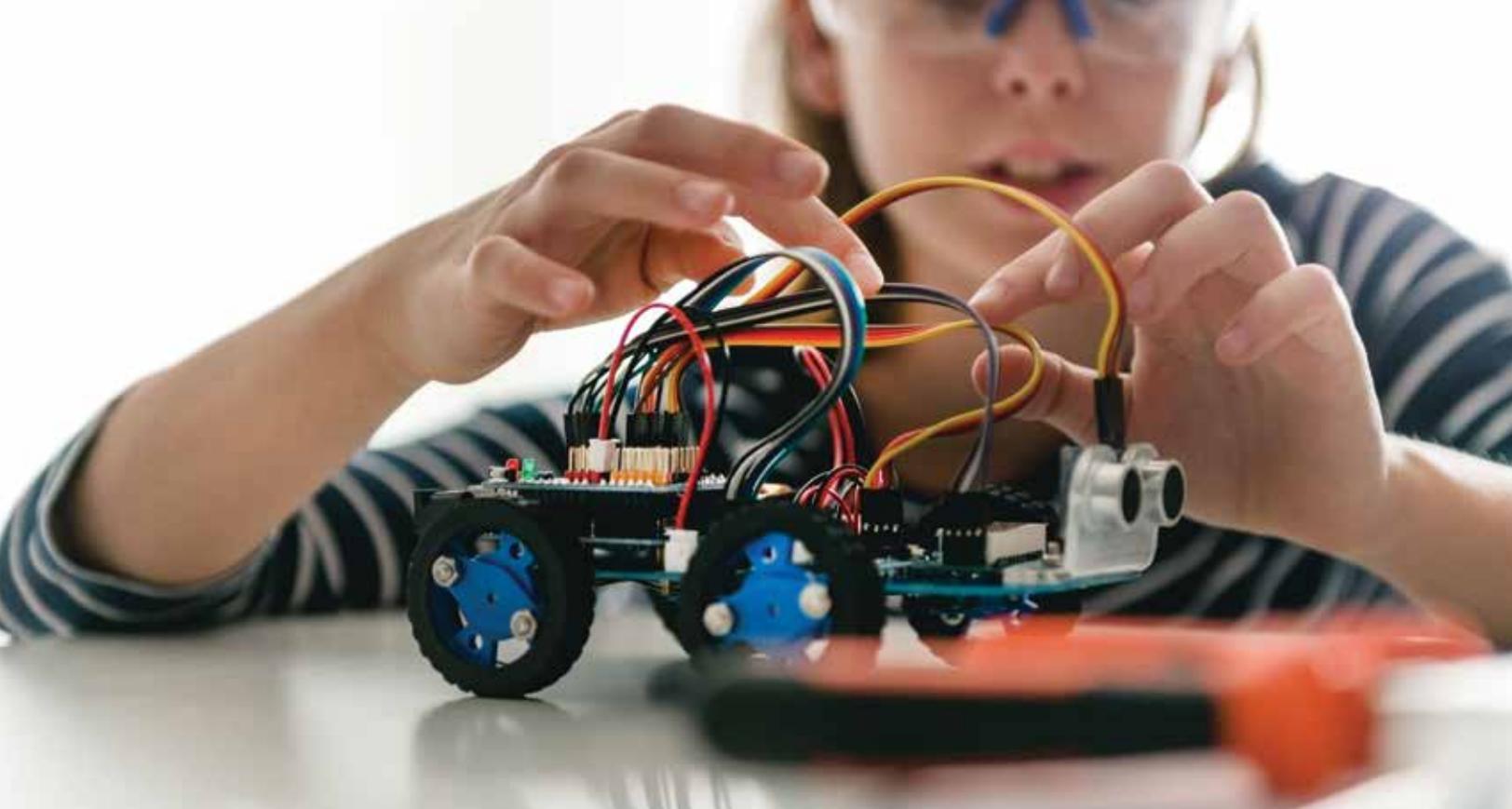
The graduation event also signals the end of the program, so sites use this opportunity to close matches. Even continuing sites may not have the same mentors and mentees from year to year, so it's important for sites to communicate that matches are officially over after this event and give mentors and mentees a chance to say goodbye. Mentees present mentors with certificates of appreciation and everyone receives a group photograph and a magnetic picture frame to commemorate the experience.

► **Train mentees in youth-initiated mentoring skills**

Low-income youth often have reduced access to naturally occurring mentors and these relationships tend to be with family and friends, rather than with nonfamilial adults which can limit their economic, educational, and career opportunities³¹. Prior to relationship closure, STEM mentoring programs might consider training mentees in the lifelong skills of being able to locate, identify, initiate, and maintain new mentoring relationships with caring adults in their lives to address the ongoing needs for support as youth enter a STEM education or STEM career. This new youth-initiated mentoring approach has been undergoing development in various forms and with diverse populations, and piloted in small pilot studies, suggesting it is a promising approach^{32,33,34}. The results of these studies suggest that students who are trained in youth-initiated mentoring approaches report a reduction in help-seeking avoidance, particularly in students from underrepresented groups, while improving the interpersonal skills students need to increase their social capital. These skills will serve STEM-interested mentees well along their journey toward a career in a STEM field.

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3

PROGRAM ELEVATION AND OUTCOME MEASUREMENT IN STEM MENTORING

One of the surprising findings of our literature review was the limited range of studies of STEM mentoring programs, and STEM education programs in general, which used strong evaluation or research designs. Only about one in ten of the research articles in our initial literature review utilized some form of a control or comparison group, with only three involving random assignment of participants to one group or another (others used a matched comparison group or other designs). We also found few examples of longer-term studies of program impact, with only a handful of evaluations using student records or other methods to track mentored and unmentored youth deep into their higher education and career experiences¹. Other reviews of the STEM mentoring literature have found similar gaps in both experimental designs and examinations of long-term outcomes².

This lack of rigorous research design makes it very challenging to make causal claims about what “works” in STEM mentoring or to understand with certainty how STEM programs or mentors can use different approaches to maximize their impact. This is one of the many reasons the recommendations and tips provided in this supplement to the Elements also draws from research in other fields and practitioner wisdom.

The vast majority of research and program evaluation in the STEM mentoring space consists of pre-post tracking of the types of outcomes discussed earlier in this guide: changes in STEM attitudes, beliefs, and plans; increased participation in STEM activities and classes; and gains in STEM knowledge and skills. This type of quantitative outcome monitoring (as distinct from comparative evaluation) was often accompanied by qualitative data collection about participant’s experiences, their insights regarding what they considered to be impactful aspects of the program, and their suggestions for optimizing service delivery. We also noted some examples of studies based on analysis of existing data sets (e.g., multi-year longitudinal questionnaires or student records).

Given the emphasis on qualitative data and the participant experience in the evaluations we reviewed, it was interesting that few of the studies focused much on fidelity of implementation of the program model. Compared to the traditional mentoring literature, in which adherence to standards or practice by staff and participation in program activities (not just match meetings, but also required training and other participant obligations) are commonly included in studies as moderators of program outcomes^{3,4}, we found few examples of that type of data in the STEM mentoring literature. While some studies noted the number

of times mentors and mentees met, or other data suggesting uptake of the program, issues of implementation were surprisingly absent in many studies. As a result, it was also challenging to find clear examples of how STEM mentoring programs could improve their service delivery.

Suggestions for improving the quality of program evaluation and research in STEM mentoring are provided at the end of this section.

REVIEW OF STEM MENTORING OUTCOMES

We thought it would be helpful to the STEM mentoring field to take stock of the full range of outcome areas and specific measures that were mentioned or used in our literature review. As noted in the General Program Design Principles section earlier in this guide—and detailed further in the Appendix—we did find that types of program outcomes tended to cluster around the age ranges of youth participants, with programs for younger mentees focused more on initial STEM interest and engagement and programs serving older adolescents or young adults emphasizing instrumental supports, professional skills, and assistance with key transitions along STEM pathways. Programs will want to select measures that speak clearly to the current STEM engagement of the mentees, the traits of those serving in the mentoring role, and the types of activities that mentors and youth engage in. In looking across the full literature review, we found programs emphasizing measures from the listing on the next page.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAM EVALUATION

STEM mentoring programs can help build the literature base for this type of programming, as well as inform program improvements, by designing evaluations with the following suggestions in mind:

▶ ***Focus on the proximal outcomes that speak most directly to the work of mentors and mentees***

As noted earlier in this guide, STEM pathways from childhood through young adulthood have many transition points and barriers that can challenge the long-term engagement in STEM for even the most dedicated and driven students.

And while every program wants to prove that their services are the key spark that propelled their mentees into STEM accomplishments and careers, it's important to remember that one STEM program, and one STEM mentor, likely plays a limited role in helping nudge that mentee along their path. Evaluations should focus on the piece of that long-term puzzle that your mentors provide to young people. Whether it's changing attitudes and building some STEM confidence or helping youth complete advanced research projects and present findings in adult settings, selecting outcomes that might be detectable “close to the action” of mentoring are most likely to show growth and impact for mentees. Programs should avoid designs that have the program searching or taking credit for distal outcomes that are beyond the control and scope of what the program provides.

▶ ***But, when possible, use accessible data to track participants into their STEM futures***

Although programs are likely to see their strongest impacts on those short-term outcomes that are most relevant to their work, there is also value in seeing if the program did result in any longer term engagement in STEM participation. This is most commonly done by tracking students using K–12 and higher education records, although we have noted examples of long-term follow-up surveys of participants, and even the use of platforms like LinkedIn, to see if program participants (or their comparisons) eventually found their way into STEM academia or industries. While you might not be able to tie these long-term findings directly to what your mentors provided, you might find that the program have varying levels of success for subgroups of participants or gain valuable information about barriers that prevented youth from building on what your program provided as they got older. This can help programs be more intentional about giving advice to mentees about challenges they may face down the road or spur new partnerships so that promising STEM mentees can purposefully transition into their next STEM mentoring opportunity.

▶ ***Track implementation fidelity***

As noted above, we did not find many discussions of levels of program participation or adherence to program procedures in the literature we reviewed. For STEM mentoring programs, it may be especially important to track indicators of program delivery, such as adherence to or completion of STEM curriculum or experiments, the volume of delivery of specific STEM messages and encouragements, or the completion of

COMMON STEM MENTORING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

STEM-RELATED KNOWLEDGE

- ▶ Knowledge about STEM subject matter
- ▶ Knowledge of STEM careers
- ▶ Knowledge of college application process and identification of college choices

STEM-RELATED ATTITUDES

- ▶ Attitudes about science (generally) or STEM subjects
- ▶ Anxiety about STEM subjects
- ▶ Interest in STEM careers
- ▶ STEM identity
- ▶ STEM sense of belonging

STEM-RELATED BEHAVIORS

- ▶ Direct STEM skills (e.g., conducting research, interpreting and reporting data, etc.)
- ▶ Skills beneficial in STEM work (e.g., teamwork, how to get information from other people, problem-solving, the scientific method, time management, and critical thinking skills)
- ▶ STEM-related confidence or self-efficacy (both in terms of schoolwork and career paths)
- ▶ Active planning for STEM careers
- ▶ Frequency and depth of engagement with STEM activities, books, media, etc.
- ▶ Affirmation of STEM career choice
- ▶ STEM-related grades or test scores
- ▶ Enrollment and/or persistence in post-secondary STEM courses

BEHAVIORAL FUNCTIONING (non-STEM-related per se)

- ▶ School attendance and behavior
- ▶ Afterschool problem behaviors
- ▶ Substance use

MENTORING AND NETWORKING ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

- ▶ Help-seeking
- ▶ Number and types of STEM-related adults youth interact with
- ▶ Quality of STEM mentoring relationships (e.g., level of participation, activities engaged in, advice giving, fun interactions)

OTHER OUTCOMES

- ▶ Parent involvement in STEM activities or post-secondary planning
- ▶ Teacher perceptions of STEM engagement

training or monitoring activities. Of course, the volume and frequency of mentor-mentee interactions can also be a critical component of program success. Investigating these markers of implementation will help the program determine why it might be more effective for some participants than others, can point to weaknesses that the staff can address, and might provide an explanation when programs don't have the successful outcomes they expect. Low-quality implementation is often the culprit when impacts are small.

▶ *Attempt to separate the value of mentoring relationships vs the program activities or other factors*

Previous reviews of the STEM literature have noted that there is almost no research detailing the role that mentoring relationships with STEM experts play, compared to other program features, in achieving program outcomes⁵. Simply put, we don't know very much about what combination of STEM relationships (role modelling, identity development, etc.), hands-on activities and experiments, direct STEM teaching, and instrumental supports will achieve the optimal outcomes for youth participants. When designing evaluations, programs may want to consider qualitative methods that can be coupled with quantitative findings to explain the ways in which mentors compliment other program features and vice versa. This can inform mentor training, the selection of STEM activities, and the additional supports that a program provides.

▶ *When emphasizing program improvement, test variations in practice and look for subgroup effects*

Also lacking in the research literature were studies designed to compare different approaches to the same practice (e.g., testing different training curricula or mentoring activities within the same program) or examine mentoring outcomes for youth of different ages or backgrounds. Programs may find that they can make targeted improvements in implementation over time by systematically testing different ways of doing the work and seeing which is most effective or satisfying for participants. Programs may also find that some groups of youth are getting more out of the program than others, suggesting key improvements that can address issues and allow all mentees to get the most out of their mentoring relationships.

One example of a program that is taking their STEM mentoring evaluation to a new level can be found in the sidebar on the evaluation work of Genentech.



Photo courtesy of Genentech

STEM MENTORING IN ACTION: Genentech's Futurelab Initiative

Since the start of **FUTURELAB** in 2015, Genentech has partnered with a third-party evaluator to measure and monitor program outcomes that include surveys, focus groups, and one-to-one interviews with our Futurelab student participants and teachers and Genentech volunteers. Genentech plans to pursue a rigorous formal evaluation of their programs after the 2020 programming year and encourages other STEM mentoring programs to consider formal evaluation to add to the field's collective knowledge of high-quality STEM mentoring practices.

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MATRIX OF STEM MENTORING PROGRAM FEATURES IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

OVERARCHING GOALS	MENTORS (TYPICAL)	MENTORING MODEL	SETTING AND SUPPORT	MENTORING ACTIVITIES (TYPICAL)	OUTCOMES MEASURED (TYPICAL)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Get young students interested and succeeding in STEM subjects in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Employees at STEM companies ▶ STEM undergrads ▶ High school students ▶ Nonprofit staff ▶ General public <p><i>For some programs, women, adults of color, and adults with disabilities are specifically recruited</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1:1 ▶ 1:many youth ▶ Group (in-person) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Youths' school ▶ After-school program ▶ STEM companies ▶ Higher education campus <p><i>Common supports:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Parent engagement and do-at-home activities* ▶ Transportation for youth, if offsite ▶ Training for mentors on conducting experiments and being relational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Adult-facilitated, hands-on science experiments ▶ Field trips to STEM museums ▶ Brief or day-long visits to STEM businesses ▶ Teaching of science concepts ▶ Tutoring for STEM school assignments ▶ Light information sharing about STEM careers ▶ Engagement with STEM media ▶ Fun, playful activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ General interest in STEM subjects ▶ Performance in STEM subjects in school ▶ Attitudes about STEM subjects (general) ▶ Anxiety about STEM subjects ▶ Interest in STEM careers ▶ School attendance and behavior ▶ Frequency and depth of engagement in STEM activities

MATRIX OF STEM MENTORING PROGRAM FEATURES IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

OVERARCHING GOALS	MENTORS (TYPICAL)	MENTORING MODEL	SETTING AND SUPPORT	MENTORING ACTIVITIES (TYPICAL)	OUTCOMES MEASURED (TYPICAL)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Build direct STEM skills and boost STEM classroom performance ▶ Nurture STEM identity and sense of belonging* ▶ Start building interest in specific STEM fields and careers and their associated higher education pathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Employees at STEM companies ▶ STEM undergrads or graduate students ▶ Nonprofit staff ▶ Women, minorities, or adults with disabilities working or studying in STEM fields* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1:1 ▶ 1:many youth ▶ Group (in-person) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Youths' school ▶ After-school program ▶ STEM companies ▶ Higher education campus ▶ Summer "bridge" program <p><i>Common supports:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Parent engagement, often as end-of-program portfolio or project sharing ▶ Transportation for youth to off-site activities ▶ Training for mentors on conducting experiments and being relational ▶ Additional training on discussing intersection of gender, race/ethnicity, and disability with pursuit of STEM careers* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Youth-led, hands-on science experiments ▶ Deeper teaching of science concepts ▶ Multi-day visits to STEM companies ▶ Deeper discussion of STEM careers and related higher education pathways ▶ Remedial instruction for youth behind grade level in STEM subjects ▶ Some exploration of the role of gender, race/ethnicity, and disability in STEM participation and careers* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ General interest in STEM subjects ▶ Performance in STEM subjects in school ▶ Attitudes about STEM subjects (general) ▶ STEM self-efficacy or confidence ▶ Anxiety about STEM subjects ▶ STEM identity* ▶ Sense of STEM belonging* ▶ Number and quality of STEM mentoring relationships ▶ Knowledge of STEM careers ▶ Interest in STEM careers ▶ School attendance and behavior



MATRIX OF STEM MENTORING PROGRAM FEATURES IN HIGH SCHOOL

OVERARCHING GOALS	MENTORS (TYPICAL)	MENTORING MODEL	SETTING AND SUPPORT	MENTORING ACTIVITIES (TYPICAL)	OUTCOMES MEASURED (TYPICAL)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop advanced STEM skills and abilities Solidify STEM identity* Fully explore STEM careers and higher education pathways Plan for STEM post-secondary enrollment* Establish or strengthen youths' network of STEM relationships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> STEM undergrads, grad students, or faculty Employees at STEM companies Women, minorities, or adults with disabilities working or studying in STEM fields* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1:1* Group (in-person)* Group (online)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher education institutions' laboratories STEM companies' laboratories or facilities Youth's school Online <i>Common supports:</i> Parental education about STEM higher education pathways and careers Information sharing around the college application process Training for mentors on sharing their experiences in STEM, particularly related to gender, race/ethnicity, and disability* Training for youth on behavioral expectations in workplace and higher education settings Incentive to earn college STEM credits or publish research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Long-term research projects and advanced science experiments Teaching of meaningful science skills (e.g., data collection and analysis, methodology, use of equipment) Job shadowing Internships Sharing information about, or assisting with, college application and enrollment Deep discussion of personal experiences in STEM, particularly related to gender, race/ethnicity, and disability* Preparation and presentation of a capstone project or published research Use of online discussion platforms for access to additional STEM mentors and increased overall engagement* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solidifying interest in STEM and STEM careers Performance in STEM subjects in school STEM skills and knowledge STEM self-efficacy or confidence STEM identity* Sense of STEM belonging* Number and quality of STEM mentoring relationships* Active planning for STEM enrollment or careers Commitment to STEM careers Knowledge of college application process Completion of college application process Enrollment in higher education (especially as a STEM major) Completion of undergraduate STEM degree Employment at STEM company



MATRIX OF STEM MENTORING PROGRAM FEATURES IN HIGHER ED./UNDERGRADUATE

OVERARCHING GOALS	MENTORS (TYPICAL)	MENTORING MODEL	SETTING AND SUPPORT	MENTORING ACTIVITIES (TYPICAL)	OUTCOMES MEASURED (TYPICAL)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Develop advanced STEM skills and abilities ▶ Solidify STEM identity and sense of belonging* ▶ Completion of undergraduate degree in STEM major ▶ Strengthening planning for ongoing postsecondary advancement or career transitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Faculty and doctoral students in STEM subject areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1:1* ▶ Group (in-person)* 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Higher education institutions' laboratories ▶ Other on- and off-campus locations for relational activities <p><i>Common supports:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Training for mentors on sharing their experiences in STEM, particularly related to gender, race/ethnicity, and disability* ▶ Training for mentors on directing mentees to additional on-campus resources ▶ Coordination of mentor role with faculty advisors ▶ Incentive of publishing original research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Long-term research projects, typically as part of a faculty-led research team ▶ Teaching of advanced science skills (e.g., data collection and analysis, methodology, use of equipment) ▶ Internships of field placements ▶ Deep discussion of personal experiences in STEM, particularly related to gender, race/ethnicity, and disability* ▶ Discussion of other campus resources to enhance or support the undergraduate experience ▶ Preparation and presentation of a capstone project or published research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Improved academic performance in STEM courses ▶ STEM skills and knowledge ▶ STEM skills and knowledge ▶ STEM self-efficacy or confidence ▶ Use of undergraduate campus resources ▶ STEM identity* ▶ Sense of STEM belonging* ▶ Number and quality of STEM mentoring relationships* ▶ Commitment to STEM careers ▶ Persistence in STEM major ▶ Completion of undergraduate STEM degree ▶ Active planning for ongoing STEM education or careers ▶ Employment at a STEM company or in a STEM field





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WORKPLACE MENTORING

SUPPLEMENT TO THE

***ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE
PRACTICE FOR MENTORING***

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MENTOR

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INTRODUCTION AND THE WORLD OF WORKPLACE MENTORING

One of the dominant trends of the youth mentoring movement over the last decade is the proliferation of mentoring roles into settings that go far beyond either dedicated mentoring programs (e.g., Big Brothers Big Sisters) or typical youth development contexts (e.g., after-school programs). A 2015 survey of organizations that provide youth mentoring services found that the vast majority of them also run some other service or intervention for youth or families.¹ While it is unclear how frequently the mentoring program within these organizations supported the other services and interventions, one can assume that in many of these organizations, dedicated mentoring was provided in conjunction with other services and supports, bringing mentors to everything from clinical mental health interventions to college and career preparatory services.

In fact, this same survey found that 26 percent of the agencies that run mentoring programs also offer separate workforce development and job training services. And when asked specifically about their goals and areas of emphasis for youth who receive mentoring, a quarter of mentoring programs indicated that they focus on career exploration, with an additional 6 percent focusing specifically on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) education and career pathways. Broadly speaking, career exploration and engagement is the third most common goal across mentoring programs in the United States.²

The application of mentoring relationships in service of career goals, especially for new or entry-level workers, is nothing new. In fact, we can trace the value of deep learning relationships with more experienced adult professionals back to the guild and apprentice structures that emerged literally several centuries ago. In more recent times, it has become fashionable for companies to offer internal mentoring opportunities to their adult employees as a way of encouraging employee retention, sharing institutional knowledge, and supporting the advancement of lower-level workers into supervisory positions and management over time.

But several recent trends have also converged to ignite renewed interest in using mentors to support older adolescents and young adults as they enter the world of work:

- ❑ **A growing emphasis on equity within certain fields.** There has been major investment in STEM mentoring programs for youth in an effort to bring more women, minorities, and people with disabilities into STEM careers where they are severely underrepresented. In fact, see our companion publication, the STEM Supplement to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, to read about how leading tech companies such as Genentech and 3M, and programs like Girls Inc. and Science Club, are using mentoring to address systemic inequities in those fields.³ For a great example of a program that is working to make the world of work (both STEM and otherwise) more accessible for youth with disabilities, see the description of the Disability:IN program later in this chapter.

❑ **A general desire to strengthen talent pipelines.**

Many American industries (e.g., manufacturing⁴ and the aforementioned STEM fields⁵) are suffering from a shortage of qualified workers of all types and mentoring can be a way to initially interest youth in pursuing particular careers, as well as keeping them on that pathway as they overcome hurdles and build their sense of belonging within an industry.

❑ **Efforts to integrate “opportunity” youth into the labor market.**

Much has been made in recent years about so-called “opportunity youth,” young people ages 16–24 who are not working, enrolled in school, or engaged in other prosocial activities and institutions. The services provided to these young people require taxpayer investment, and they are not contributing to the economy more broadly.⁶ To the nation’s credit, there has been much effort over the last decade to reengage this population. Relationships with adults are often at the heart of efforts to get opportunity youth back into the worlds of education and work.⁷

These trends, along with recognition that it is harder today for young workers to find entry-level jobs and slowly build a resume and relevant job experience than in prior generations, have led to an explosion in the number of youth mentoring programs that are explicitly helping youth explore careers.

Today we find a diverse landscape of career and workplace mentoring options for youth, one that covers everything from mentoring programs for middle schoolers to introduce them to careers they may never have considered, to hybrid job shadow/mentoring programs that bring young adults into worksites to build both hard and soft skills that will benefit them for the long haul (and perhaps even land them a job in the short term with that company).

What are the practices that make these mentoring programs effective? What are the day-to-day practices that these types of programs employ that differ from more traditional “developmental” mentoring programs? While there are some

Defining Workplace Mentoring for Youth

While there are many ways that mentors can support youth of all ages as they learn about, explore, and engage in career pathways, this guide’s recommendations will be most applicable to programs:

- Serving older adolescents and young adults (16–24).
- Connecting employees of a business or a particular industry to serve as mentors to youth who are considering a career in that industry or related field.
- Bringing, at least occasionally, mentees to job sites and workplace environments for hands-on learning and shadowing.
- Offering both job-related skill development and socioemotional support to ease the transition into the role of a worker.

While these actions may not describe many mentoring programs focused on career interests, they do represent the most common features of programs we observed utilizing mentoring to support career interests and placements for youth and young adults.



similarities of good practice across all youth mentoring programs, these workforce-focused programs often have complex partnerships between nonprofits, schools, local employers, and other entities, as well as different expectations for mentors and the youth themselves. So what makes this new generation of workplace mentoring programs tick?

Answering these questions is the purpose of this guide, as we examine the practices of successful workplace mentoring programs for youth and offer specific recommendations for running such a program beyond those found in the overall *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. Throughout the rest of this resource you can find recommendations and case studies that can help similar programs prepare the mentors who will in turn prepare youth for the world of work.

THE WORLD OF WORKFORCE-FOCUSED MENTORING PROGRAMS

To better understand the landscape of workplace mentoring programs for youth, the team of authors behind this resource conducted a literature search for scholarly articles, evaluation reports, training curricula, and other materials relevant to mentoring programs with a career exploration or job skills component. We utilized prominent databases—primarily Scopus, PubMed, Google Scholar, and ERIC—then expanded to include additional articles suggested in the references of documents found in the initial search. When possible, relevant chapters from books and essay collections were also included.

In all, we reviewed 198 separate articles, books, book chapters, reports, and other programmatic materials in developing this supplement. The following table offers a breakdown of these resources:

- 109 were articles published in peer reviewed journals.
- 58 featured results of formal program evaluations (including qualitative evaluations or non-experimental research detailing participant experiences, as well as meta-analytic summaries of research on formal programs).
- 11 focused on programs or mentoring experiences serving elementary or middle school ages, 43 focused on high school ages, and 74 focused on either young adults (post-high-school graduation) or on adult workplace mentoring.
- 34 featured examinations of natural mentors in workplace and academic settings, rather than mentors supplied through a formal program. A small handful addressed both.

While we did draw some themes and recommendations from the literature on adult-adult mentoring in the workplace, we emphasized the findings of programs focused on adolescents or young adults just entering the workforce. When looking at those programs, the vast majority described either brought professionals in a particular industry or field to a school or nonprofit service provider's facilities in order to mentor youth and discuss careers and skills related to their industry or, more often, brought youth to worksites for hands-on learning, skill building, and mentoring within the direct context of work.

Several of the studies reviewed focused on, or at least included, employee-employee mentoring within companies. While these programs technically exist outside of the preferred scope of this resource,



we found value in examining their practices, particularly in how those programs were managed and how the mentoring experience was framed for both junior and senior employees.

In looking across all of this literature, several themes emerged.

MAJOR THEMES FROM THE RESEARCH

There is compelling evidence that mentoring relationships can be beneficial to youth and young adults as they enter the workforce.

Looking broadly at the literature on workplace mentoring, we see strong evidence that mentored individuals benefit in a number of ways compared to workers who are not mentored. Perhaps the most global evidence for the impact of mentoring on careers are the meta-analyses led by Drs. Lillian Eby and Tammy Allen, which found that mentored employees often reported benefits related to compensation, promotion, fringe benefits, job satisfaction, commitment and intent to stay in a job, and overall career satisfaction and identity.⁸ It is worth noting that some of the research informing these results included mentoring for adult employees, but the roles and functions of mentors described in these studies—a blend of hands-on job skill teaching and psychosocial support—mirrors the role of mentors working with youth and other entry-level employees.

Other research notes that supportive mentors can supplement the school-to-work transition and help integrate new employees into a workplace while also helping them identify with the role of “worker”—something that can be unfamiliar to young people just entering the world of work.⁹ Mentors can be

particularly helpful with the transition into work for youth with disabilities, with studies noting significant improvements for these youth in career-related planning and preparation, knowledge of career options and transitions, and social skills and peer/coworker relations.¹⁰

Additional research has looked specifically at the value of mentors for high school-age students engaging in their first jobs. One study of workplace mentoring programs found that mentors for young apprentices in several trades were essential in helping youth apply concepts they had learned in school to real-world job settings, offering a safe environment for them to start applying knowledge, knowing that a more experienced professional was also there to assist them.¹¹ This study also found that workplace programs offered skill development that went beyond the technical skills of a job task—these additional “soft” skills included things such as managing client relations, customer service, and workplace communication. In another study, youth who were working in their first jobs at companies that had a formal mentoring component were more likely to see that school was relevant to the world of work, had higher self-esteem, and enjoyed their work experiences more than youth working without the benefit of workplace mentors. This study concluded that youth working without a mentor found this early job experience to be “demoralizing” and in many ways harmed their perceptions about work and themselves.¹²

Interestingly, this study was one of many to find that informal workplace mentors can be just as effective in supporting young workers as those provided by a formal program.^{13, 14} Both formal and informal mentors in workplace programs seem to be effective at improving workplace attitudes,



motivations, and relationships.¹⁵ But because not all youth are equally adept at finding “natural” mentors in workplace environments, formal programs can ensure that all youth engaged in the transition into work get the support they need.

We have strong evidence that mentors can help young people build their identities as workers, help them apply their school learning to work, teach them soft skills that can be essential to career success, improve their attitudes and motivations about work, and generally give young workers opportunities to learn new skills and how to be part of a team. This sets the stage for ongoing career success and tangible rewards, such as higher compensation, advancement up career ladders, and greater job stability.

Workforce mentoring programs often involve complex program structures and cross-organization partnerships.

Compared to most mentoring programs, which are often provided by a nonprofit, a school, or some combination thereof, we found many diverse partnership structures and collaborative models across the literature we examined. We found examples of programs run by a vocational placement center in partnership with multiple high schools and several local businesses,¹⁶ a high school internship program that connected youth to worksites but also offered other courses and learning opportunities through the nonprofit that led the program,¹⁷ a school-led program that connected young people to employers who offered mentoring but also offered academic credit for participation,¹⁸ and a partnership between local businesses and a high school where youth spent one day a week at the job site engaged in work-based learning for all four years of their matriculation, to name a few. One

prominent meta-analysis examined programs set in classrooms (where employee mentors worked with groups of students on projects), in the community (where mentors were free to help youth explore many different careers, among other goals), and the workplace (where mentees served as entry-level employees, even if they were technically part of a nonprofit or school service that connected them to the job site).¹⁹ Given this diversity of program structures, and the need to coordinate services and schedules across many locations, we place a greater emphasis on logistical considerations and clear roles and responsibilities for partners in the recommendations throughout the sections that follow.

Program goals and areas of emphasis shift with the age and career development stage of the mentees.

Programs serving younger adolescents tend to focus on building initial excitement and enthusiasm for careers in various fields, often letting mentees explore many different career roles or fields. As youth age, programs become more focused, offering deeper learning experiences and hands-on application of skills to youth who want to truly experience what being in a job might be like. At the farthest end of the development spectrum are programs for entry-level workers who are being oriented to the workplace with the help of a mentor. Generally, programs for younger mentees are about building workplace skills and competencies, as well broadening the horizons of possible careers. The hands-on teaching of skills and embedded experiences at worksites then increase over time as youth age and become eligible for real-work experiences (see the sidebar for examples of such experiences).



Mentors in workplace mentoring programs often wear many hats.

Perhaps the most striking finding from our review of the literature was the varied roles and responsibilities that workplace mentors often take in formal programs. While all mentors bring a variety of skills and actions to bear on their relationships, mentors in workplace mentoring programs often have to toggle between many different roles, some of which may be contradictory of each other.²⁰ For example, it is not uncommon in these programs for mentors to also be the supervisors of the mentees, meaning that they have to both provide friendship and support while also being responsible for giving direct feedback and work critiques. Several studies discussed the tension between the obligations to support the mentee and the obligations to the company to run a safe, productive team. Trying to maintain a friendly, supportive mentoring relationship while also balancing other work obligations is not easy.^{21, 22}

One prominent meta-analysis of workplace mentoring identified several core mentoring behaviors that workplace mentors frequently engaged in: sponsorship (arranging for mentee involvement in special projects), exposure and visibility (touting the mentee to higher ups in the company), coaching (direct teaching of skills and giving advice), and protection (shielding the mentee from harmful decisions or blame).²³ Another prominent researcher, Stephen Hamilton, noted several distinct behaviors that workplace mentors engage in: (a) instruct a learner on how to perform a task, (b) demonstrate how a task is performed, (c) coach a learner as the task is being performed, (d) explain why a task is done in a particular way, (e) challenge a learner to perform well, (f) initiate a

Common Contexts for Career-Focused Mentoring

Career exploration

Learning about specific industries and jobs to find an initial “spark”; most often housed in schools.

Work-based learning

Teaching skills, often around a collaborative project with students; often a combination of classroom and worksite activities.

Job shadows

Brings youth into the workplace where they can observe, build skills, “try on” the role; can range from just a few visits to multiweek engagements (or longer).

Internships/Apprenticeships

Youth as quasi-employee, focused on skill development; generally lasting from one semester to a full year at the job site.

New employee onboarding

Youth is an employee and the emphasis is on deepening engagement, solidifying role identity, and integration into workplace culture; often offered during “probationary” periods of employment or longer.

Academic mentoring

Happens in postsecondary setting with the intention to build workforce skills and mastery of content knowledge; often offered through shadows or internships over the course of a semester or year of study.

learner into the culture of a work organization, and (g) affirm a learner’s value as a person and talent as a worker.²⁴ This list was later expanded by Hamilton to include tasks such as critiquing the mentee’s



performance, modeling problem solving, resolving problems in the workplace, and advising on further career options.

Another summary of the research on workplace mentoring focused on the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that these mentors need to be successful.²⁶ Among the traits that literature suggests workplace mentors need to possess or develop are:

- Empathy
- Ability to model work styles and behaviors
- Confidence
- Patience
- Trust
- Being good listeners and questioners
- Technical knowledge of job and field
- Strong past performance in the job
- Strong motivation to mentor
- Role-modeling skills
- Credibility as a messenger
- Adequate time during workday to engage in mentoring activities and teaching

And this list doesn't even include other critical skills and roles, such as the ability to give constructive feedback, setting and honoring boundaries, helping mentees set and plan for goals, and managing group dynamics when integrating a mentee into a collaborative team.²⁷ While all of the frameworks and lists of competencies in the literature are helpful when thinking about the mentoring role within a particular program, most workforce mentoring programs ask mentors to provide two explicit things: 1) psychosocial support that helps with the attitudes, motivations, and interpersonal relations

and skills of the mentee; and 2) career support that either teaches skills or helps the mentee apply classroom knowledge and helps them feel successful in their job and produce good work results. Broadly speaking, the research suggests that mentoring programs in work environments may be better positioned to offer psychosocial support, but that they can be effective in both.

There are several keys to success for workplace mentoring programs for youth.

Most of the recommendations for good practice suggested in the literature can be found in the remaining sections of this guide. But there were a few findings from the literature that are worth noting here:

- For shorter-term programs, (e.g., those lasting just a semester or less in the case of working with a school class) **research suggests an emphasis on work skills and other hands-on learning might be more impactful than the psychosocial support that workplace mentors can also provide.**²⁹ Those relationships take time to gel and are often most beneficial when integrating new workers into a role where they will be longer term. Programs with short time frames may have more impact by emphasizing job skills and letting mentees focus on tasks and hands-on learning.
- **Frequency of interaction is an important consideration in workplace mentoring programs,** particularly those that are shorter in duration.³⁰ More interaction points simply provide more opportunities for knowledge to be shared and for the pair to develop a closer bond. As noted above, psychosocial support and overall perceptions of relationship quality both deepen with time, but if length of match will be inherently short, programs



should still ensure that mentors and mentees have plenty of discrete moments for interaction and engagement together. Unfortunately, some workplace mentoring programs give mentees repetitive, simple entry-level tasks that limit both mentor-mentee interactions and opportunities to learn.³¹ Compared to academic mentoring, which may emphasize longer-term actions like role modeling and identity development, workplace mentoring really depends on frequency of interactions to let mentees feel supported around doing the work, while also laying the foundation for more personal forms of support.

❑ There were several discussions about good matching practices in the literature we reviewed. Most studies suggested that **matching based on experiential similarity** (mentor-mentee similarity in terms of background, education level, current job tasks, longer-term career goals, etc.) **was beneficial**.^{32, 33} There seems to be some consensus that mentees should be paired with mentors who are above them in terms of position and mastery of skills, but who are still within the same department or job type.³⁴ Matching mentees to mentors who are similar but further along in their career path accomplishes several things:

- o It allows mentors to apply what they know best to what the mentee is learning. They get to share all the “tricks of the trade” with a junior colleague who is eager to learn and can emphasize both job skills and job-specific psychosocial support. Simply put, the mentor is in a more comfortable situation to teach.
- o It also allows for better role modeling. A mentee might be able to picture their future self more effectively in a more advanced peer in a way that they might not if they were

matched with, say, a vice president of the company. Those mentors are so much higher up the career ladder that it can be hard for a mentee to see themselves in that role, and the mentor likely has less direct knowledge to share.

- o It allows for easier integration of the mentee into a “team.” While almost all the programs we reviewed featured one-to-one mentor-mentee pairs, the reality is that mentees often find themselves joining a team of coworkers in a department or unit that does similar work. Being matched with an experienced leader within that group helps ease the transition into the group environment and can lead to the establishment of additional informal mentoring relationships.

While there are some advantages of pairing mentees with management positions and higher, especially in programs intended to motivate mentees to go high up a career ladder, the chances are that they might find more common ground and more relevant forms of support from a mentor who is closer to where they are in their career.

- ❑ It is worth noting, however, that there was some evidence in the research we reviewed in favor of what might be thought of as **distributed mentoring**, where a mentee gets mentoring from a variety of people, positions, and roles within a company or an industry.³⁵ This approach can offer mentees broader perspectives and can alleviate negative mentoring experiences where there is conflict with a primary mentoring figure. Even in programs that intentionally match one-to-one, there should be efforts to encourage the mentee to find additional mentors beyond just



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their primary one. When it comes to successful transition into a workplace or supporting feelings of belonging in an industry or field, it may be a case of “more is better.”

□ We found several examples in the literature of programs that provided more than just a placement at a job site and a mentor to “show you the ropes.” These types of programs offer what can be thought of as “**pre-internship**” or “**pre-apprentice**” experiences³⁶ where program staff, usually from a nonprofit leading the program, provide a lot of the coaching and teaching around professionalism and soft skills in an effort to make sure that the mentee is prepared for the culture and ready to contribute when they get to the job site.³⁷ These models make a lot of sense as employee mentors are often not trained in strategies for teaching soft skills or the more subtle nuances of professionalism. These programs that spend time preparing mentees for the world of work can often experience fewer mentor-mentee conflicts and provide their business partners with youth who are ready to integrate into the culture of the organization, or who possess critical skills, when they show up. (For one such example of a program that

prepares youth for the mentoring experience while augmenting it with additional teaching and skill development, see the brief case study on the work of Urban Alliance on this page.)

Even in programs that don’t offer this preparatory period for mentees, the literature suggest that employers should be prepared to help mentees develop their soft skills and learn what it is like to be a worker, to take on that identity and all it entails.³⁸ Employers should not expect that youth will show up with those skills inherently and may want to seek out program models where a school or nonprofit partner is helping get youth ready to be in the workplace environment.

There are also models where employees get ready for the world of work without focusing on being embedded in the worksite at all. One prominent example of this general skills approach can be found in the side bar about the work of General Motors’s Student Corps program, which engages youth and GM employees in intensive community projects that are not strictly about entering the workplace but that provide youth with a wealth of job-related skills nonetheless.



WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION:

BUILDING WORKER COMPETENCIES OUTSIDE OF THE WORKSITE WITH URBAN ALLIANCE

Urban Alliance recognizes that interns' on-the-job mentors must balance that role with their full workloads, so the organization's program coordinator role is incredibly important to act as a liaison between the intern, school, mentor, and workplace. Program coordinators not only facilitate the mentoring experience (matching youth with mentors, providing guidance on both sides, etc.) but also lead the program's skill-building and work preparation activities.

Interns begin the program with a six-week pre-employment boot camp called "pre-work" where they participate in skill-building workshops to develop critical workplace competencies (e.g., time management and clear communication) that prepare them not only for their specific internship placement, but also for the world of work in general.

Once interns begin work and are paired with a mentor, interns spend each Friday afternoon attending a series of ongoing trainings with their program coordinators. These sessions focus on a different core competency each week, such as receiving feedback, collaborating on a team, and handling harassment in the workplace. These lessons supplement what they are learning on the job, and students' mentors are also kept informed of the training schedule and encouraged to build upon the interns' new skills with unique real-world learning experiences at work.

This collaboration between mentors and program coordinators means that youth are getting far more than just advice—they are getting a coordinated opportunity to learn and practice new skills and ways of understanding that will allow them to thrive in any future workplace.



WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: **BUILDING QUALITY WORKERS BY FOCUSING ON COMMUNITY PROJECTS IN GM'S STUDENT CORPS**

When one thinks about General Motors and a concept like workplace mentoring, it would be easy to assume that the company built their mentoring model around placing youth into specific jobs within the company for internships and other job-shadowing experiences. And while the company does offer college graduates and alumni of the Student Corps program an opportunity for those types of experiences down the road, the work of their Student Corps program takes a much more holistic and community-focused approach.

The program is built around a team structure of 10 high school-age interns, three GM retirees, and one college student who embark on an ambitious journey over 10 weeks to brainstorm, plan for, and implement a service project that betters the youths' community in some way. Examples of these types of projects include school improvement projects (e.g., redesigning and painting murals in common spaces), park beautification (e.g., installing new playground equipment), building and repairing bicycles for youth in need, and facilitating a reading program for children.

While those activities seem a conceptually long way from building cars, the program uses these service projects to teach valuable workplace and career skills: the value of planning and collaboration, managing budgets and timelines, managing multiple roles and tasks simultaneously, and effective communication and teamwork. The projects selected by youth also often involve specialized or technical skills, such as desktop publishing, design and engineering, or marketing.

By giving the interns the chance to identify a project that would be meaningful to them, the program gets great buy-in from the start. The learning that happens through the implementation of the project is further supplemented by life-skills trainings one day a week that further build the competencies of the interns, both in terms of professional skills and personal health and wellbeing. The program is dedicated to making great professionals tomorrow by giving youth these deep learning experiences and broad skills today.



DEVELOPING THIS GUIDE

As noted above, a literature search and review was conducted around concepts of workplace mentoring, school-to-work transition, work-based learning, job shadowing, apprenticeships and internships, and other career-exploration research that included a relational component. Based on this review, the authors drafted an initial set of recommendations that served as the starting point for this resource.

Expert Working Group

The reality is that there is only so much that the research on any mentoring topic can tell us—there will always be a lag between the innovations and best practices in place at high-quality service providers and the work of researchers, who often come in after the fact and validate practices that those working on the “front lines” could already

have confirmed were working. To that end, this project convened a working group of experts from many of the nation’s leading workplace mentoring programs, as well as several prominent researchers whose work is foundational to understanding workplace mentoring. The members of this group are profiled in the table below.

This group reviewed several iterations of recommended practices, often suggesting additional practices or nuances that were not found in the literature but that had real-world applicability, before ultimately approving the list of recommended practices found here. MENTOR can’t thank this group enough for their contributions to this resource. Readers can also find numerous case study examples throughout this guide that highlight the work of these workplace mentoring leaders and illustrate what many of the recommended practices look like “in action” in real-life programs.

Working group member/program	About their work
Janelle Duray – Jobs for America’s Graduates	<p>Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) is a state-based national nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing dropouts among young people who have serious barriers to graduation and/or employment. In more than three decades of operation, JAG has delivered consistent, compelling results—helping over one million young people stay in school through graduation, pursue postsecondary education, and secure quality entry-level jobs leading to career advancement opportunities.</p> <p>JAG specialists provides individual attention to students focusing on reducing the number of barriers preventing them from receiving a high school diploma, securing employment, or pursuing postsecondary education and/or training that leads to a career. Additional adult mentors are recruited to assist with barrier reduction or removal.</p>
Lillian Eby – University of Georgia	<p>Dr. Eby is a professor of Industrial-Organizational Psychology and the director of both the Owens Behavioral Institute for Research and the Enhancing Connections and Health in Organizations Lab at the University of Georgia. She has published extensively on the topics of workplace mentoring and apprenticeship programs and on the impact of natural workplace mentors. Her research interests are focused on the area of relationships and occupational health, with a special emphasis on mentoring and the healthcare workforce.</p>



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Working group member/program	About their work
Stephen and Mary Agnes Hamilton – Cornell (Emeritus)	<p>Stephen F. Hamilton served as professor of Human Development and codirector of the Family Life Development Center at Cornell University until his retirement in 2015. As a Fulbright Senior Research Fellow, he studied Germany’s apprenticeship system as an institution supporting the transition to adulthood of youth without college degrees. His book, <i>Apprenticeship for Adulthood</i>, and the demonstration project he designed and led with Mary Agnes Hamilton helped to guide the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994. He has also conducted research and contributed to program development related to service-learning and mentoring.</p> <p>Mary Agnes Hamilton served as senior research associate in Human Development at Cornell and director of the Cornell Youth and Work Program in the Family Life Development Center until her retirement in 2015. Dr. Hamilton taught for four years in public schools in Richmond, Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland. Dr. Hamilton’s primary interests are education and adolescent development. Her research and program development have focused on the quality of learning environments in the community, mentoring relationships between nonrelated adults and youth, and the transition to adulthood. Throughout her career, she sought to advance educational opportunities for all youth to gain character and competence.</p>
Corey Manning – YouthBuild USA	<p>All local YouthBuild staff are trained to be caring mentors for students while they are in the program. In addition, in order to provide adequate adult support for YouthBuild graduates transitioning into employment or college, YouthBuild USA has developed a mentoring model to engage adult volunteers in 15-month mentoring relationships that cover this transition.</p> <p>YouthBuild USA has obtained funds from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention to create this mentoring model at over 42 local YouthBuild programs. Through this model, 4,000 mentoring matches have been made and supported. The goal of this work is to ensure that mentored youth complete the program, enter college, stick with placements, provide higher levels of service and leadership to their communities, and become mentors themselves.</p>
Linda Rodriguez – JPMorgan Chase/ The Fellowship Initiative	<p>The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) provides intensive academic and leadership training to help young men of color from economically distressed communities complete their high school educations and better prepare them to excel in colleges and universities. TFI is part of the firm’s broader ongoing efforts to provide adults and young people with the education, skills, and resources that contribute to greater economic mobility.</p> <p>To date, more than 200 JPMorgan Chase employees have worked with TFI fellows as mentors, coaches, role models, speakers, or volunteers in various capacities. Since its launch in 2010, the program has been expanded and will recruit new classes of fellows in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and New York.</p>



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Working group member/program	About their work
Wanda Rogers - Disability:IN Uinta County	<p>Disability:IN Uinta County, an affiliate of the national Disability:IN, empowers businesses to achieve disability inclusion and equality. NextGen Mentoring is one of the initiatives sponsored by Disability:IN Uinta County that provides two distinct mentoring programs:</p> <p>Employment Mentoring is an innovative program that promotes quality employment and career opportunities for youth with disabilities. The program engages the active participation of employers in providing career exploration, employment workshops, and summer employment. Through these activities, youth participants gain career guidance, insight, and experiences they need to obtain jobs and develop meaningful, rewarding careers.</p> <p>One-on-One Mentoring is a long-term mentoring program where adults and youth are matched for one year. Mentee and mentors have weekly contact and engage in four-to-six hours of positive activities a month. Mentors assist mentees in goal setting and encourage them to become their best self. Mentors provide a positive influence and mentees gain a better outlook on life. The NextGen Mentoring staff provides personal, ongoing support to participants, helping each match thrive and succeed.</p>
Helen Russell - Apprentice Learning	<p>Founded in 2012, Apprentice Learning (AL) partners with middle schools serving high-needs students to teach career skills and help students enter the workforce equipped for success. Focused specifically on career readiness for Boston middle school students, AL serves more than 300 students annually through 12-15 hour workplace-based apprenticeships, one-day workplace explorations, a summer job placement service, and a summer program for girls.</p> <p>Our apprenticeship program, part of the regular school day at our partner schools, teaches essential workplace skills in a series of classroom-based seminars and then matches an eighth grader with an adult in the workplace. For six once-a-week, two-hour sessions, a young person learns alongside of their mentor, and has an opportunity to put skills like communication, self-presentation, self-advocacy, and problem solving into practice while learning about workplace purpose and culture.</p>
Guy Saint Juste - Year Up National Capitol Region	<p>In partnership with leading US employers, Year Up invests in highly motivated young adults 18-24 years old. Our young adults participate in an intensive year-long program, composed of six months of technical training and professional skills development, followed by a six-month internship with one of our corporate partners—industry leaders in the markets we serve. Students are paid a stipend during both phases of the program and may earn college credits for Year Up coursework. Throughout these experiences, students are supported by staff advisors, professional mentors, dedicated social services staff, and a powerful network of community-based partners. The career pathways Year Up offers directly reflect the needs of our corporate partners. Young adults develop valuable, in-demand skills, and our corporate partners gain access to a strong pipeline of talent to meet hiring needs at all levels.</p>



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Working group member/program	About their work
Jim Schroder - Spark	<p>Spark is a career exploration and self-discovery program that helps middle school students understand, experience, and pursue what's possible for their future. We are leading The Possibility Movement by bringing together diverse communities of families, schools, and companies who care, share, teach, and inspire.</p> <p>Spark's program offerings help students to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand What's Possible: Students are introduced to and explore various careers. • Experience What's Possible: Students are immersed in activities that increase social and emotional learning skills and build social capital. • Make Possibilities Reality: Students are equipped to successfully transition to high school and take the steps needed to pursue their unique future. <p>Spark was founded in 2004 in Redwood City, California, and has grown to serve nearly 10,000 students across four regions— Chicago, Los Angeles, Philadelphia, and the San Francisco Bay Area.</p>
Dan Tsin - Urban Alliance	<p>Urban Alliance's core High School Internship Program prepares underserved high school seniors for future economic self-sufficiency through an intensive, year-long experience combining paid professional internships, job skills training, one-on-one mentoring, and ongoing post-program support. Paid interns work part-time during the school year (Monday through Thursday for up to 12 hours per week) and full-time during the summer (Monday through Thursday for up to 32 hours per week). Interns also complete up to six weeks of pre-employment professional skills training, and then transition into weekly post-high-school-planning and job- and life-skills workshops on Fridays for the duration of their internship. Each intern is assigned a dedicated Urban Alliance program coordinator, as well as a workplace mentor, who provide support to guide the intern's professional development and post-high-school transition planning.</p>
Matt Ybarra - General Motors Student Corps	<p>Student Corps, founded in 2013 as an extension of GM's commitment to education, matches teams of 10 high school interns with retired GM executives and college interns to plan and execute community service projects, usually at schools and parks. The students manage all aspects of their projects, from budgeting, planning, and troubleshooting to meeting deadlines. Student Corps interns are selected based on their leadership potential, dedication, determination, and academics. In between physical tasks of cleaning, landscaping, and painting, they attend workshops on managing money, building relationships, and staying healthy and safe. They tour GM facilities, dealers, and local college campuses to sample career and educational opportunities.</p>



USING THIS GUIDE

This supplement to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* will be most useful to those starting workplace or career-focused mentoring programs, as well as to those who are looking to strengthen existing services. Each section, from Recruitment through Closure, offers research-informed recommendations that should help workplace mentoring programs implement effective services beyond just adhering to the generic practices suggested in the original Elements.

For each Benchmark and Enhancement recommended in the original Elements, the authors have either:

- ❑ Offered additional practice recommendations for these specific types of programs
- ❑ Noted where no additional recommendations were warranted
- ❑ Noted where a Benchmark or Enhancement might not be applicable at all for workplace mentoring programs (these most often relate to parental involvement in programs where mentees are over 18 and parental permission is no longer mandated)

Programs are encouraged to implement as many of the core Benchmarks and Enhancements of the Elements as possible. There is always room to improve or to strengthen the delivery of any program. But we feel that following the recommendations here will be helpful to any mentoring program that is:

- ❑ working with older youth to learn deeply about careers or get hands-on experience with the help of mentors;
- ❑ supplementing more traditional job training or entry-worker training with a highly relational or mentoring-focused component; or
- ❑ connecting youth who are matriculating out of educational experiences to real-world job experiences, internships, and apprentice-style relationships with established employees and professionals.

One thing came through clearly: it has become remarkably hard for young people to find an initial foothold in the job market. This is especially true for youth who may be forgoing post-secondary education and entering the workforce directly after high school. The current generation of young workers has a harder time building relevant job experience through the teenage years and faces myriad challenges landing a quality job that invests in them as contributors to the success of the company and potential long-term assets. MENTOR is proud to support the types of programs and practitioners that are working to bridge the divide between school and work, between adolescence and young adulthood, by utilizing mentors at this critical transition point. We thank you for your programming and your recognition of this critical moment. We hope this guide helps you do your work more effectively and helps more young people find a home in our economy.



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STANDARD 1 - RECRUITMENT

Standard: Recruit appropriate mentors and mentees by realistically describing the program's aims and expected outcomes.

BENCHMARKS:

Mentor Recruitment

B.1.1 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits (to society, the company, and to mentees), practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring in the program.

- ❑ **Recommendation 1:** Program should include at least one general message in recruitment strategies about the many potential benefits to mentees of participating such as increased exposure to workplace settings, employment opportunities, employability, workplace retention, and access to college and job training programs; as well as other benefits that may be unique to the specific mentoring program.
- ❑ **Recommendation 2:** Program should include information in the recruitment strategies about requirements for being a mentor in the program and specifically, whether the time spent mentoring will be compensated by the employer as part of the mentor's work schedule or whether mentoring will be conducted outside of work.
- ❑ **Recommendation 3:** Program should include information in recruitment strategies about the types of pre- and post-match support that will be provided to mentors, as well as who will provide the support.
- ❑ **Recommendation 4:** Program should be clear in recruitment strategies about the roles mentors are expected to play in the program (e.g., a connector, advocate, job trainer or coach, job

supervisor, or friend who is available to provide social-emotional support in the workplace).

- ❑ **Recommendation 5:** Program should emphasize the commitment and support of mid-to-senior level leadership in the company for the program, making it clear that the program is valued and endorsed by the company.

B.1.2 Program utilizes recruitment strategies that build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring.

- ❑ **Recommendation 6:** Recruitment strategies should help build positive attitudes and emotions about the work and jobs that mentors do.
- ❑ **Recommendation 7:** Recruitment strategies should reflect positive attitudes and emotions about the company sponsoring the mentoring program.
- ❑ **Recommendation 8:** Recruitment strategies should include strategies, such as storytelling about mentoring relationships in the workplace, which can build positive attitudes and emotions about being a mentor in the program.

B.1.3 Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.

- ❑ **Recommendation 9:** Program recruits mentors from within the company who are passionate about their work and who will share their excitement about the work they do every day and the career path they followed.
- ❑ **Recommendation 10:** Program recruits mentors who have an interest in building a relationship with mentees and not just teaching them technical skills.



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❑ **Recommendation 11:** Program identifies and recruits mentors from within the company who have good communications and social-emotional skills.

❑ **Recommendation 12:** Program recruits company retirees to be mentors within the workplace mentoring program.

B.1.4 Program encourages mentors to assist with recruitment efforts by providing them with resources to ask individuals they know, who meet the eligibility criteria of the program, to be a mentor.

❑ **Recommendation 13:** Program provides current and former mentors with recruitment materials, and asks them to assist with recruitment by talking with co-workers about also becoming mentors.

B.1.5 Program trains and encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate mentors for themselves, when relevant.

❑ **Recommendation 14:** If mentees are employed or interning within a company, then program should teach mentees to locate and develop a system of support beyond their assigned mentor.

Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

B.1.6 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.

❑ **Recommendation 15:** Program should use strategies for recruiting mentees that illustrate the myriad benefits of being mentored, such as exposure to a workplace, increased employability (possibly at the company sponsoring the

mentoring program), increased workplace retention, increased understanding of the relevance of school, increased credentials for college or job training programs, and increased school engagement.

❑ **Recommendation 16:** Program should mention in its mentee recruitment materials if there are tangible benefits to mentees for participating in the program, such as being paid to participate in the program; receiving assistance in obtaining a GED, academic credit, or job-related certificate; or prospects for subsequent hiring by the company.

❑ **Recommendation 17:** Program should communicate the level of time and effort commitment required for participation in the program.

❑ **Recommendation 18:** Program should communicate in the mentee recruitment materials if accommodations are offered to mentees with a disability.

B.1.7 Program recruits mentees whose needs, knowledge, skills, and attitudes best match the services offered by the program.

❑ **Recommendation 19:** Program defines whether there are specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for mentees to participate in the workplace mentoring program.; and inform mentees if competency in specific or general workplace-related skills is required for acceptance or continuation in the program.

Company recruitment

New B.1.8 WORKPLACE: Mentoring program should carefully consider whether the company will provide the time, effort, resources, and supports needed to successfully host or execute the workplace mentoring program.

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ENHANCEMENTS:

Mentor Recruitment

E.1.1 Program communicates to mentors about how mentoring and volunteering can benefit them.

- ❑ **Recommendation 20:** Program communicates to mentors several benefits of participating in a workplace mentoring program, including learning from their mentees in ways that support the mentor's own career goals and growth areas.

E.1.2 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.

- ❑ **Recommendation 21:** Mentoring program has a written statement outlining eligibility requirements for participation in the program that is publicly available to employees and retirees.

E.1.3 Program uses multiple strategies to recruit mentors (e.g. direct ask, social media, traditional methods of mass communication, presentations, referrals) on an ongoing basis.

- ❑ **Recommendation 22:** Program should conduct group presentations in the company for the purpose of recruiting volunteers to be mentors in the program.

E.1.4 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentees in its program.

- ❑ **Recommendation 23:** Programs that recruit young adults over age 18 may not need to have a publicly available written statement outlining mentee eligibility criteria; however, parents, significant others, case workers, personal aides, and support workers may be helpful in recruitment and retention efforts even for potential mentees in this older age range.

E.1.5 Program encourages mentees to recruit other peers to be mentees whose competencies and needs match the services offered by the program.

No additional recommendations.

JUSTIFICATION

The first contact that mentors, mentees, and parents/guardians of mentees have with a workplace mentoring program is typically during the recruitment process. Expectations for program activities, outcomes, and responsibilities are often established during this critical early stage. Thus, workforce mentoring programs, like any mentoring program, need to think carefully about their recruitment messages and strategies and how their policies at this initial stage will help establish and maintain effective mentoring relationships.

Because workforce-focused mentoring programs are often located within a workplace, they have some distinct advantages over community-based or even other types of site-based mentoring programs with respect to mentor recruitment—they have a readily accessible target audience of prospective employee mentors. In addition, volunteers in these types of settings may receive some form of compensation or other incentive (e.g., release time, recognition) for participating in the mentoring program, which can be an additional source of motivation. Similarly, mentees may receive financial compensation or stipends for working in workplace mentoring programs, in addition to the myriad other benefits associated with being a mentee. Taken together, these tangible and intangible benefits may draw both mentors and mentees to the program. However, despite these advantages, workplace mentoring programs can still face challenges to recruitment and retention of mentors and mentees.

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The nascent stage of research evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring program practices generally is also reflected in the literature on workplace mentoring. Unfortunately, the empirical literature on workplace mentoring provides little direct guidance regarding specific recruitment practices and their effectiveness for recruiting the needed quantity or type of match participants, or in predicting match success. In fact, participant recruitment *settings* are frequently mentioned in reports about workplace mentoring programs, whereas the *content* of recruitment messages is mostly missing. As in other types of youth mentoring programs, more research is needed on the types of messages that are effective during the recruitment process for workplace mentoring programs. Due to the paucity of studies on this topic, most of the recruitment recommendations were derived from conversations with practitioners and this project's Working Group members, and non-peer-reviewed reports designed to describe workplace mentoring programs.

This Supplement for Recruitment into workplace mentoring programs adds one benchmark practice to those found in the original fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (B.1.8 WORKPLACE). The remaining recommendations for this standard are discussed in five main sections including: 1) the types of benefits that could be included in recruitment messages; 2) the resources available to support mentoring relationships; 3) the attitude or emotional tone to use in recruitment messages; 4) the inclusion of information about program requirements in recruitment messages; and 5) ideas about recruitment settings and strategies.

COMPANY RECRUITMENT

Commitment and Resources of a Host Workplace

In order for a workplace mentoring program to be successful, a workplace or company needs to agree to host or partner with a mentoring program. Because this involvement is fundamental to defining a workplace mentoring program, a new **Benchmark 1.8** was created in the Recruitment Standard. The most important issue related to this new benchmark is that the employer or company needs to commit sufficient resources to supporting the program or it will likely fail¹. Specifically, getting buy-in from the executive leadership is considered to be a key to program success, especially for stimulating mentor recruitment², but it is noteworthy that it could take some time for employers to become educated and understand the level of commitment needed to fully support a workplace mentoring program.³

The literature provides several strategies for recruiting companies to participate in a mentoring program including having program recruiters think like a salesperson and have recruiters learn to speak the “business language” of employers.⁴ One example Sullivan (2018) provided is that employers in the tech industry understand the term “talent” better than the term “participant.” Gaining familiarity with the target industry and their common vocabulary would help for preparing to recruit host companies and partners into workplace mentoring programs. Recruitment strategies could be conducted word-of-mouth and networking, but could also occur at discipline-specific conferences and networking events. Sometimes the local Chamber of Commerce; state departments of employment; national, state, or local guilds, professional associations, or councils;



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or community colleges or universities can help with introductions to potential industry partners.⁵

One factor to consider when recruiting companies to participate in a workplace mentoring program is their motivation to participate in or host a program. The program needs to meet a clearly defined need of the company or the leadership may lose interest in the program over time.⁶ The motivation can range from wanting to provide employees with a volunteer experience to training employees in leadership skills and creating a pipeline of talent that might feed into the company, specifically, or the industry, more generally. Although many companies are dedicated to and motivated by civic engagement and increasing their corporate social responsibility, committing employee time, and hence money, to supporting this type of initiative represents a major, long-term commitment. Thus, the more that company recruitment efforts can speak to company needs and goals, the better the chance that the program will find business partners who properly resource and maintain their commitment.

BARRIERS TO RECRUITING AND RETAINING COMPANIES

There are several barriers to companies making this type of deeper commitment to a workplace mentoring program. Some companies believe that student interns or mentees do not contribute enough to the workplace to justify the time and effort needed to supervise them.⁷ Some programs that include job training have the challenge of coordinating their program content with existing high school or trade school curriculum.⁸ Other programs may worry about possible negative reactions from labor unions, if present in the workplace, to using student or temporary labor to do work that might be perceived as threatening the full-time jobs of employees.⁹ Another barrier

is that some companies may be concerned that student employment might violate child labor laws.¹⁰ Some companies may have an attitude that having apprentices or mentees on the job is only for some limited set of professions or trades (e.g., construction).¹¹ Taken together, organizations or individuals interested in initiating a workplace mentoring program may need to be prepared to address one or more of these barriers when recruiting an employer or company.

To address these and other possible barriers, companies launching or joining a workplace mentoring program for the first time might consider committing to several pilot years before deciding whether or not to continue long term. The first year may represent a paradigm shift at the company from having no time spent on mentoring and having no mentees in the workplace to having employees spending time engaged in a mentoring program. It can take time for everyone at the company to become acclimated to the new program, and for the program to recruit sufficient numbers and types of volunteers to meet the needs of all students placed there. Longitudinal studies report tremendous volatility in companies participating in workplace mentoring program,¹² particularly, when outside funding to support program operations ceases. Thus, planning for a “training-wheels” year or two may help to ease both the company and mentors into making a longer-term commitment to the program.

For a great example of a workplace mentoring program that uses a varied and sequential approach to bringing local companies into the fold for increasing levels of participation, see the example of Apprenticeship Learning detailed below.



WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: GETTING COMPANIES ENGAGED IN MENTORING THROUGH MULTIPLE ON RAMPS AT APPRENTICE LEARNING

Apprentice Learning has engaged over 60 different worksite partnerships largely through outreach and “cold calls” to local businesses. While not efficient, this has been very effective for many of our small retail businesses located near partner schools. Our success has been based on building strong, positive relationships with these business owners and providing a good match between a worksite and an apprentice. Any participating worksite partner must be within a 30-minute radius and accessible by public transportation to one of our partner schools.

Last year, we launched an initiative to “Demystify the Skyline” for Boston youth with outreach efforts to recruit more corporate business partners located in Boston’s downtown economic engine neighborhoods. To this end, we host downtown breakfast events and invite prospective mentors. We also have current mentors on hand at these events who showcase their work with apprentices. We have recently added two new board members, both from the corporate sector, who have been actively engaging colleagues across their professional networks to consider participation.

Our summer program, City Summer Internship, offers an opportunity for businesses to host a one-day Workplace Exploration. This has proved to be a great entry point for companies who can use the summer months, typically a slower time, to “try out” Apprentice Learning. Typically, a business engages a group of employees to host a group of 12–15 interns for a tour, presentation, and a small group Q&A over lunch. Once employees meet with young people and realize how capable, curious, and engaging they are—even at 14 years old, they are more likely to consider an apprenticeship.

It is our hope to mount a bigger marketing campaign citywide although this is so funding- or pro bono dependent.

PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT

Messaging about the Benefits of a Workplace Mentoring Program

Participant recruitment messages traditionally contain information about the benefits of program participation, and these messages are designed to appeal to and motivate volunteers and youth to action. Because of the power of inspirational and motivational messages, there are several recommendations about benefits that have been

reported for workplace mentoring programs that can be incorporated into recruitment strategies. It is important to remember that although there are some general ways that workplace mentoring programs have been found to be effective; each mentor, mentee, mentoring relationship, and workplace is unique, and the exact benefits of a workplace program may vary across individuals, mentoring programs, and host companies.



Benefits to Mentees

Recommendation 1 (mentor recruitment) and **Recommendation 15** (mentee recruitment) suggest that both mentor and mentee recruitment messages should address the benefits to mentees of participating in *workplace* mentoring programs. Furthermore, recruitment messages should mention the specific benefits associated with participating in a workplace mentoring program and not just the generic positive effects of being mentored. These messages can attract both youth participants and altruistic employee mentors who want to know that their time commitment will positively impact youth. Learning about the potential benefits of workplace mentoring for mentees, particularly if they are industry or job specific benefits, may be particularly motivating.

As noted in the Introduction, the literature and practice wisdom on recruitment suggest that workplace mentoring participation is associated with myriad benefits for mentees in terms of growth, both personally and professionally,¹³ and the most commonly mentioned and supported benefits are described below. These benefits can be included in both mentor and mentee recruitment materials.

☐ **Job training skills.** Participation in a workplace mentoring program often includes job training and job shadowing resulting in mentees acquiring some growth in specific job-related skills as a consequence of participation. In one example, almost half of YouthBuild programs surveyed mentioned the vocational skill-building components of the program in their recruitment materials.¹⁴ Through both direct instruction in job training and apprenticing with an experienced, older mentor, mentees may increase their

self-confidence and sense of responsibility in the workplace, as well as develop a deeper appreciation of building job-related expertise.^{15, 16, 17} Learning specific job-related skills can assist mentees in finding paid work when the program ends and this is highly motivating to them.

☐ **Exposure to workplace settings.** One intangible benefit of the fact that many workplace mentoring programs are located in a company is that it provides mentees with an opportunity to be engaged in the culture and inner operations of a workplace. This context provides them with the opportunity to develop skills related to understanding company culture and policies, such as how to behave and communicate with managers and other superiors, as well as practice developing interpersonal skills in collaborating and communicating with coworkers.

☐ **Networking skills and growth of social capital.** Workplace mentoring can facilitate mentees developing broader networks of social support in addition to the support that they receive from their mentors. These networks are beneficial in many ways, such as being resources for information on career pathways, and educational, internship, or job opportunities; helping connect with other professionals; looking for advice about dealing with conflict or disagreements with coworkers; or needing emotional support. Having multiple mentors has many benefits, especially for mentees with previous mentoring experiences, which may have taught them how to participate in a healthy, productive mentoring relationship.¹⁸ Mentees are thought to benefit from having “developmental networks” that provide them with multiple relationships with a “portfolio of advisers”, rather than one relationship with a single mentor.^{19, 20}



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Helping adolescents and young adults develop this portfolio of mentors and supportive adults can be a great program benefit that extends far beyond the youth's time in the program.

❑ **Employment opportunities and employability**

(possibly at the company sponsoring the workplace mentoring program). In interviews with program participants, one study noted that a key reason youth were interested in being a mentee was the vocational training opportunities offered and, if they were successful, the future potential of the program in helping them find a job.²¹ In fact, almost half of YouthBuild programs surveyed reported that they promoted their program in recruitment materials as a way to help young people find jobs. Some workplace mentoring programs also serve as feeder programs into a job pipeline where mentees can transition from being interns or apprentices to becoming full-time employees. Increased employability and job earnings, either through skills training or making job-related connections, has been associated with other programs for older adolescents that integrate a mentoring component.²²

❑ **Career-related outcomes.** Mentoring appears to have positive effects not only on workplace behaviors, but also on increasing commitment to the workplace. In a meta-analysis on the potential career benefits of mentoring, a wide range of positive career-related effects were found—mentees reported being more satisfied with their careers and jobs, as well as more committed to their careers than non-mentored individuals.²³ However, mentoring did not appear to have a statistically significant effect in this meta-analysis on having greater intentions to stay at the current company, although it did trend in that direction.

• **Access to and increased credentials for college and job-training programs.** One consistently reported benefit from participating in workplace mentoring programs is increasing one's access to and credentials for college and other job-training programs, such as obtaining a high school diploma or GED, or earning college credits.²⁴ In addition, students may obtain paid summer jobs and receive job training in a workplace mentoring program resulting in being more likely to enroll in a college preparatory or specialized academic program.²⁵ Speculating on the importance of these types of outcomes, the YouthBuild program's most popular recruitment message, used by 80 percent of programs surveyed, was letting prospective mentees know that if they participated in the program, they would have the opportunity to secure an academic credential such as their GED certificate or a high school diploma.²⁶ Notably, the majority of program participants interviewed about their experiences in YouthBuild reported that this potential benefit was the main reason they applied to participate in the program.²⁷

❑ **Reduced antisocial behavior.** The evaluations of most workplace mentoring programs tend to focus on outcomes related to educational and vocational success; however, one well-designed experimental study bears mentioning, because it reported an unexpected positive finding of decreased criminal behavior.²⁸ This outcome may not be a universally useful benefit to include in recruitment messages directed at mentees, although it may be appealing to youth involved in the juvenile justice system and their families.

❑ **Enhanced belief that school is relevant.** As students develop across adolescence and in schools that do not provide training related to



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job skills or career success, many students are skeptical about the relevance of school to their lives. Through perceived support from mentors, youth may grow to feel more positively about school and better appreciate its relevance to the world of work and their roles at work.²⁹ In another study examining high school students from low-income families who participated in an urban work-based adult–youth mentoring program, and who requested and developed a relationship with a workplace mentor, student participants believed more strongly that school was more relevant to work than students who worked without having a mentor.³⁰

□ **Tangible benefits.** Some workplace mentoring programs offer tangible benefits to mentees such as stipends or certificates. **Recommendation 16** notes that programs should mention in recruitment messages if they offer tangible benefits to mentees for participating in the program. For example, 43 percent of YouthBuild programs advertised that they offer a stipend to participants and used language in their recruitment materials such as “earn while you learn” to attract youth to the program. About 15 percent of participants mentioned that the stipend was an attractive aspect to the program, but not the primary reason they applied to participate.³¹ Thus, tangible benefits are important to mention, but not sufficient by themselves for attracting mentees.

Benefits to Mentors

While common recruitment messages tend to focus on impacting the lives of mentees, few studies have directly examined whether these types of messages are motivating to volunteers. There may

be other benefits that are more directly associated with the needs and goals of mentors that may also be motivating to them and that can support their ongoing commitment to the mentoring program. Consistent with a need for diversity in recruitment messaging around program benefits, **Recommendation 20** addresses communicating about potential benefits of volunteering in a workplace mentoring program to prospective mentors. Four types of benefits are described below.

First, some potential **altruistic** benefits for mentors include outcomes that are related to being a contributing member of one’s community or company, and developing skills that support the mentor’s own career development. In fact, the mentoring relationship provides opportunities for the mentor to develop both personally and professionally. The intrinsic satisfaction of helping improve the lives of young people, having a larger sense of purpose and fulfillment at work through sharing their knowledge and expertise with others, and contributing to improving the quality of education available in one’s own community through providing on-the-job training and mentoring are all potential benefits to volunteers.^{32, 33, 34, 35} In fact, improved communication skills are commonly reported as resulting from the experience of being a mentor.³⁶

Second, although the primary goal of a workplace mentoring relationship is to promote the career-related goals of the mentee, mentors may also **learn from their mentees** in a reciprocal, mutual relationship.³⁷ Mentors can gain insights into the backgrounds and complexity of the lives of their mentees, and this knowledge can enrich their understanding of their mentees, but also



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contribute to their own personal and professional development.³⁸ Mentors may also develop their social capital in the process of helping their mentees build their social capital. Mentors can learn a lot about their own company and coworkers from introducing their mentees to both other jobs and functions within the company, as well as to other coworkers, colleagues, and collaborators.^{39, 40}

Third, related to the career goals and development of mentors, the receipt of training and ongoing support in a workplace mentoring program, as well as the experiences associated with being a mentor to a younger protégé, can support the **development of leadership, management, communication, and coaching skills**, particularly for workplace mentors who are new to being a job manager or supervisor.^{41, 42, 43, 44} When mentees are successful, mentors may also be recognized and rewarded by company management for nurturing new talent.⁴⁵ In addition, being a mentor can positively effect mentors' perceptions of their career success, increase their commitment to their company, and potentially enhance their own job performance.⁴⁶ Moreover, cross-sectional research has found that proximal benefits of mentoring such as a sense of fulfillment for mentors predict more global work-related outcomes, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and the willingness to serve as a mentor in the future. It is worth noting that the literature on the benefits of being a workplace mentor have not supported the idea that mentoring is related to long-term objective career outcomes, such as having an increased salary or being more likely to be promoted (for a review, see Tong & Kram, 2013⁴⁷). The main reason that authors have suggested for this hypothesis not being supported is that there are many other factors (e.g., job

performance) that influence these specific types of career outcomes.

Finally, in addition to provide tangible benefits to mentees, workplace mentoring programs may consider providing **incentives** for mentors and including this information in their recruitment materials, particularly within the company. Some examples that have been suggested include cash bonuses, time off, and favorable citations in their personnel files.⁴⁸ Incentives could be made contingent on mentee's job performance, meeting goals, or retention on the job.

Benefits to the Community

Although not directly related to volunteering or applying to be in a workplace mentoring program, mentioning benefits of the mentoring program to the community may be worth including in recruitment messages. These types of programs have the potential to positively impact the community by increasing employability and reducing dependence on public support,⁴⁹ reducing violent crime,⁵⁰ establishing cross-organization partnerships to support positive youth development, and stimulating local economic growth and development.

Benefits to Companies

There are many potential benefits to employers or companies for hosting or supporting a workplace mentoring program for youth. Most of the empirical research on benefits to companies have focused on benefits of having mentoring programs for nurturing the careers of adult employees rather than of youth from the community. Hence, the findings from these studies need to be applied with caution. Furthermore, although these papers report that



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employees love their mentoring experience and like their job more, no empirical papers were found on the impact of employee mentoring programs on company revenue or climate. Notably, companies vary in their motivations for having mentoring programs and the frequency of these different types of motivations vary across companies based upon their goals, needs, size, resources, and values. Three basic types of motivations were suggested for why companies may decide to adopt a workplace mentoring program, including philanthropic, individual, and collective,⁵¹ and they are described below.

First, **philanthropic** motivations include a commitment to public service, a desire to improve the communities adjacent to the workplace, and a commitment to social or corporate responsibility.⁵² These altruistic goals can spillover into more individual company goals of wanting to project a positive image in the media, to stakeholders and stockholders, and the local community. Through leadership and engagement in a workplace mentoring program for local youth, companies may find a side benefit that participation results in positive public relations. Notably, philanthropic reasons were the most commonly reported reasons employers gave for participating in a student internship program, 95 percent of which included a workplace mentor who counseled students and taught them job-related skills.⁵³ Specifically, employers reported their main goals were to contribute to their community and improve the public education system.

Second, **individual** reasons for having a workplace mentoring program include goals that are specifically related to the individual company or organization. For example, some companies have

difficulty meeting their hiring goals and by having student interns participate in a mentoring program at the company, they may be able to identify and nurture local talent.⁵⁴ This approach to hiring can be seen as an advantage to mentees as well, who are looking for paid work opportunities. In a survey of companies across a wide range of industries who had work-based learning programs, most of which included informal mentoring, employers reported being very pleased with the quality of work completed by their interns, believed that the interns were productive workers, and viewed the program as a means to expand their pool of qualified candidates and acquire entry-level workers when the program ends.^{55, 56} By hosting a youth workplace mentoring program companies are able to screen, train, mentor, and observe potential employees during a kind of probationary and training period, thereby, making an investment in the future of their company and workforce, while also providing a community service. Similarly, companies may be attracted to the fact that high school students participating in a workplace mentoring program are an inexpensive source of labor which might further motivate companies to be involved.⁵⁷

Third, **collective** motivations for participation refer more indirect or longer-term benefits that may be seen as a variation of individual benefits to companies. These collective goals reflect the shared interests of a united group of employers. In this case, a group of employers may be motivated to facilitate the growth of an entry-level workforce with a particular set of skills and hosting a workplace mentoring program may be one way to support this effort.^{58, 59, 60} In other words, when employers recognize a local, regional, or national shortage of qualified workers or they know of disparities in

the workforce related to a particular type of job or discipline, they may join forces to support workplace mentoring or school-to-work programs. These types of apprenticeship/learning programs may increase the number of skilled workers available, thereby, improving the number and diversity in the applicant pool from which to choose in the future. Another interesting angle related to the collective motivation of companies to participate in a workforce mentoring program is that employers may believe that their participation can help to reverse negative stereotypes associated with the people who work in a particular industry as well as stereotypes about the work itself.⁶¹

These three general types of motivations do not operate in isolation from one another and it is likely that companies are motivated by more than one goal. For example, employers reported dual motives for participating in youth workforce preparation programs including supporting their corporate mission to directly invest time and money in local programs, as well as seeking public recognition for their philanthropic work.⁶² In addition, individuals who mentor and whose employer supports youth mentoring in some way were significantly more likely to have higher career and job satisfaction than those who work at places where the employer does not support mentoring.⁶³ Furthermore, the happiest employees in that same study, both in their careers and in their commitment to their employers, were individuals who mentored with the backing of their employer showing that supporting mentoring programs addresses both individual and collective motivations.

For a great example of a program that really makes a compelling case to potential partner companies and their workers, see the box below on the work of the Spark program.

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: **GETTING COMPANIES TO VIEW MENTORING AS A WIN-WIN PROPOSITION**

While Spark's primary impact is focused around student growth and skill development, a critical component of the program's success is partnership with local businesses who provide access to their workplace and the recruitment of their employee volunteers. Each partner company has unique business and community investment priorities that motivate their engagement, including the following.

- Spark's model provides opportunity for companies to address business challenges such as talent recruitment and retention among millennials, who, studies demonstrate, often bring a social impact focus to their work, or creating informal networks across siloed company departments, as well as providing opportunities for positive public relations exposure.
- Many partners are seeking a turnkey yet meaningful opportunity for employees to leverage their professional skills in making a local impact. Others carry a responsibility for investing long term in a pipeline of diverse future employees in their industry.
- Finally, there are many studies that demonstrate how mentors can grow their communication and supervision skills—as well as soft skills such as cultural understanding, teamwork, patience, and empathy—through the mentoring experience.

Spark's best partners determine alignment between Spark's mission and their business priorities and recognize they are better positioned to attain their organizational goals through the partnership.



MESSAGING ABOUT THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS IN A WORKPLACE MENTORING PROGRAM

Recommendation 3 and **Recommendation 5** address the importance of recruitment messages containing information about the types of pre- and post-match support that mentors will receive if they participate in the program. Mentors need to know what level and types of support they will receive from both the management at their company and from their mentoring program (assuming the program is not run in-house, but rather through a nonprofit partnership). Being a workplace mentor may be an unfamiliar role for many employees—having training, guidance, and tangible and intangible sources of support may make the difference between a successful and unsuccessful match. Similarly, recruitment messages should be clear that company executives, including mid-to-senior level leadership, value the program and endorse its presence in the workplace. Similarly, **Recommendation 17** suggests that messages should mention the specific supports or accommodations that may be offered to mentees with a disability. This information is particularly relevant for workplace mentoring programs that are specifically designed for youth with a disability, but all mentoring programs should note how they support youth with varying levels of disability-related needs or challenges.

CONVEYING A POSITIVE ATTITUDE IN RECRUITMENT MESSAGES

There are three related recommendations regarding using recruitment strategies that contribute to potential volunteers having positive attitudes and emotions about being a mentor. These

recommendations focus specifically on promoting positive attitudes related to the type of work and jobs that the mentors do, and presumably, that the mentees will do under their tutelage (**Recommendation 6**); positive attitudes about the company sponsoring the workplace mentoring program (**Recommendation 7**); and positive attitudes about being a mentor in this specific program (**Recommendation 8**). Communicating positive messages about mentoring more generally is consistent with research suggesting that people volunteer when they believe that the work that they will do will be a positive emotional experience, rewarding, and satisfying.⁶⁴ Thus, the tone and affect used in recruitment strategies is important for attracting appropriate and dedicated mentors. Not only does mentoring, generally speaking, need to be presented in a positive way, but the workplace setting, host, the work itself, and the program also need to be positioned to enhance mentor recruitment and retention. Using positive affect and enthusiasm in recruiting youth applicants is also important. Employees who are passionate about their work can share their excitement about what they do every day and their career path in getting there. Youth may gravitate toward placements where there seems to be genuine enthusiasm about the work and the culture of the industry.

RECRUITMENT MESSAGES ABOUT PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

One of the primary reasons for premature closure of mentoring relationships is that match participants often have unrealistic or unrealized expectations. In order to counteract this trend, there are seven recommendations that address the importance of recruitment messages including clear and complete information about program requirements.



Mentor Requirements

Recommendation 2 (e.g., time commitment and compensation) addresses the types of information to include about program requirements in marketing messages directed at mentors. Volunteer mentors need to fully understand the requirements of their workplace mentoring program, including the type of time commitment they are expected to make.⁶⁵ The time that mentors spend on mentoring activities will detract from time available to spend on work tasks and responsibilities. Thus, support from senior management will be critical and managers will need to communicate to their employees that time spent on mentoring and related activities is expected and will be compensated appropriately. For example, it is generally not expected that employees serving as mentors will take vacation time or have to make up time when they go through training for the program or spend time mentoring. Policies around time parameters spent on mentoring need to be documented and communicated to program participants, as well as the HR department to ensure that employees get paid for their time spent as a mentor and maybe even receive additional incentives for making this contribution to their workplace.

Mentors also need to have sufficient time to commit to being a mentor and need to consider the timing of volunteering within the context of their other job responsibilities.⁶⁶ Given other work demands, it is important for mentoring programs to make it easy for volunteers to apply to the program; be clear about their responsibilities related to the program; track mentoring activities and time spent with mentees; receive resources and support for mentoring; and receive recognition for their efforts. Mentors also need to know if their performance as a mentor will be incorporated into their formal

performance evaluations as an employee, or if their volunteering is not considered within their evaluations.⁶⁷ Companies may be cautioned about including mentoring activities into job performance appraisals in case it undermines mentors' commitment and interest in the program. Employers should avoid creating scenarios where employees are only mentoring for performance evaluation or compensation reasons.

Recommendation 4 speaks to being clear during the mentor recruitment process about the roles that mentors should and should not play with their mentees. Providing a clear statement of expectations regarding the roles of mentors in workplace mentoring programs is particularly important given the complexity of the typical workplace and the fact that mentees will be working together at the company. This information is critical to communicate both pre- and post-match to mentors to prevent boundary violations, confusion about appropriate behavior, and reduce impediments to establishing an effective mentoring relationship. Most programs are careful to define the role of the mentor to be different than other roles related to the workplace. For example, it is uncommon for direct supervisors or managers to be assigned to supervise their mentees because of the risks associated with having a dual—and occasionally conflicting—relationship. Roles for mentors can range from training mentees in general work habits and skills to training mentees in specific job skills, and from being a connector, supporter, and adviser to being less deeply involved in providing socioemotional support. In addition, mentors serve as positive role models related to job skills and career development⁶⁸. Whatever the roles are for a particular program, they need to be clearly articulated.



If **job definition, status, or title** is a requirement for eligibility, this information should be included in marketing messages. Although there are differences of opinion on this recommendation, one suggestion is that it is “essential to identify mentors (or coaches) high enough in the hierarchy to understand the workplace as a system. Workers who know only one job can teach only that job, which is not what we mean by mentoring.”⁶⁹ Perhaps a broader way to interpret this recommendation may be that mentors need to be familiar enough with their jobs, companies, professions, and coworkers to be able to adequately provide their mentees with sound advice, networking opportunities, and support. If mentors are also early in their careers, they may not have the time, wisdom, or work experience to provide career-related guidance to essentially a peer. On the other hand, as noted in the Introduction, when mentors are too senior in their positions, it may be hard for a mentee to see themselves as sharing the same perspectives and employment possibilities as their mentor. In these cases, the mentor may be too far removed from the actual work being done to teach the right skills or to allow the mentee to build their identity as a worker in the roles that are most immediately in front of them. Thus, assessing the program’s goals, as well as the needs, goals, and competencies of the mentor and mentee will be instrumental in determining criteria for recruitment and matching.

Additional mentor requirements are described in **Recommendation 9** regarding mentors who are passionate about their work and who will share their excitement about the work they do every day and the career path they followed with their mentees; **Recommendation 10** regarding recruiting mentors who have an interest in **building a relationship**

with mentees and not just teaching them technical skills; and, relatedly, **Recommendation 11** speaks to recruiting mentors who have strong communication and socioemotional skills, such as patience, dependability, and confidence.⁷⁰ Given the disparities observed of women, first-generation college students, minorities, and youth with disabilities working in certain professions (e.g., STEM) and in the workforce, one criterion that may be assessed is cultural sensitivity (e.g., related to gender issues).⁷¹ Also, given the interest in helping connect mentees to other employees, one requirement may be that mentors have well-established social networks within the company^{72, 73} or profession, or be willing to expand their networks.

A final recommendation for workplace mentoring programs, **Recommendation 21**, suggests that programs define the **eligibility requirements** for employees and retirees participating in the program and to make this statement clearly available within the company. For example, because mentees may be learning a specific job-related skill as part of the program, mentors may need to have expertise or competency in that skill.

Mentee Requirements

Recommendation 17 notes that it is important to communicate clearly in recruitment messages to prospective mentees about the **time and effort commitment** required for program participation to help prevent unrealistic expectations and program dropouts.⁷⁴ Some programs are intensive and time-consuming, or long-lasting, whereas others are shorter and focused on specific skill development. Mentees may need to reorganize their schedules or commit time during their school or workday to the program, while still accomplishing their other

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responsibilities, and need to know in advance about the program structure and requirements in order to avoid having practical constraints result in quitting prematurely.

Recommendation 19 suggests that programs define whether there are specific types of knowledge, skills, or attitudes that are required for mentees to have in order to participate in the program and further, that recruitment strategies should inform mentees if any competencies in **specific or general skills** are required for acceptance or continuation in the program. Because some workplace mentoring programs involve applying technical knowledge or skills, or even interpersonal skills needed to integrate smoothly into a worksite, programs should include information in their marketing materials clarifying any required skills. Workplace-related skills may include behaviors such as demonstrating a history of being on time for appointments or work, the ability to focus on tasks without interruption, being open to feedback, being eager to establish a relationship with a workplace mentor, and the willingness to learn new skills.^{75, 76, 77} Attitudes towards work and mentoring are also important in predicting positive outcomes and should be mentioned in recruitment messages. In one example, in a small study of workplace mentoring, mentees who were motivated to participate in a mentoring relationship had higher-quality mentoring relationships.⁷⁸ Thus, programs should ensure that youth who apply have the right attitudes and frame of mind to benefit from the program.

Many workplace mentoring programs match junior employees with more senior employees. The literature has fewer reports of workplace mentoring programs delivered to young out-of-work adults or adolescents who are not already employees.

Stringent **entrance criteria** have been reported for some workplace mentoring programs.^{79, 80} For example, the YouthBuild program has an initial rigorous Mental Toughness Orientation (MTO) used to screen out applicants. This process requires applicants to demonstrate a readiness to change and high levels of motivation. Given that the MTO plays a central role in the program for determining eligibility and suitability for remaining in the program, it is important to describe this program requirement in recruitment materials. You can learn more about this aspect of the YouthBuild model in the chapter that follows, “Standard 2: Screening,” as MTO represents the last hurdle youth must clear before participating in the full program.

In another example of a program with strict entrance criteria, only high-performing mentees were eligible and nominated by both their manager and a task force to participate in a leadership mentoring program for women.⁸¹ In a third example, high school student participants accepted into a workplace mentoring program had to meet minimum requirements of having a GPA of 2.0 or better, and have a school attendance rate of 80 percent of days present or more.⁸² These examples illustrate the importance of defining eligibility requirements in recruitment messages, so appropriate applicants are recruited and enter the program with realistic expectations.

Recommendation 23 specifically advises that a publicly available written statement regarding requirements for mentees in the program isn't required if the recruitment is happening by nomination or preselection. Nonetheless, recruitment and retention efforts might be supported by having eligibility criteria be publicly available, particularly when trying to locate and



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recruit young adults, who may not be enrolled or connected to a school or formal program. By having the statement available to the public, parents, significant others, case workers, personal aides, and support workers may see it and suggest the program to individual adults they know, thus increasing the potential pool of applicants.

STRATEGIES FOR RECRUITING MENTORS

Recommendation 12 suggests recruiting mentors whose backgrounds best match the goals of the program, and also addresses the value of recruiting company **retirees** to be mentors. Retirees would have a wealth of knowledge about the company and their former job, more free time to volunteer, and the ability to provide career support and advice to a young person. This strategy has proven to be successful for many companies because they have a cadre of alumni and retirees, where many want an ongoing relationship with their former employer and the opportunity to maintain connections with their former coworkers and colleagues, field of work, and former workplace. For one such example, see the following box about the creative use of General Motors retirees in the Student Corps program.

Recommendation 13 thus focuses on using recruitment materials to address the value and benefits of mentoring in the program specifically related to recruitment of coworkers to serve as mentors. Sometimes peer-to-peer conversations are very influential in comparison to broader marketing efforts or communications from company executives or supervisors.^{83, 84} There are some mentoring programs that ask supervisors and current workplace mentors for recommendations for employees who would make good mentors rather than soliciting volunteers from the entire company.⁸⁵ In this type of situation, if mentors

are identified as being desirable candidates for a workplace mentoring program, they might be emailed a description of the program with a cover letter from the managers who recommended them.⁸⁶ One interesting suggestion we noted in the literature was to leverage existing affinity groups in the recruitment process. An example that was suggested involved companies with a large group of employees who were veterans. This group of employees might be recruited as mentors and matched with mentees who were also veterans or who had served in the same branch of the military.⁸⁷

Another strategy for identifying and recruiting mentors is described in **Recommendation 14** suggesting that the program should teach mentees to locate and develop a system of support within the company in addition to their assigned mentor, and that mentees can be assisted in making these connections by their mentor, who would activate their relationships with coworkers. This recommendation reflects the burgeoning literature on the benefits of youth- or in this case, mentee-initiated mentoring. The benefits of building social capital and networks of support were described earlier in this chapter. In addition to having mentees recruit additional mentors for themselves, they can also help recruit mentors for their peers. In fact, one youth program, YouthBuild, reported that word-of-mouth referrals from program alumni proved to be their most successful recruitment strategy.⁸⁸

Recommendation 22 suggests that the mentoring program conduct group presentations at company meetings to recruit volunteers. In addition to mentoring program staff describing the program and its requirements to employees, testimonials from current and former mentors and mentees might also highlight their experiences in the



**WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION:
TAPPING INTO RETIREES AS A CRITICAL FORM OF SUPPORT FOR
YOUTH IN GM'S STUDENT CORPS**

One of the great untapped resources across the world of workplace mentoring are retirees, including those from the very companies that choose to get involved in mentoring young people directly. As noted in this chapter, retirees bring a wealth of institutional and job-specific knowledge, the experience of working on many roles in an industry, and considerable amounts of time to devote to the program. Yet the authors of this report noted very few examples of programs purposefully engaging retirees in the studies and reports we reviewed. One company determined to change this dynamic is General Motors, whose Student Corps program is built explicitly around the strong participation of GM retirees.

Any company the size of GM likely has a large retiree pool to draw from, but GM has cultivated a strong alumni network over the years that engages in a number of activities and projects that keep former employees connected to the company. But the Student Corps program is where that alumni network is placed front and center. Retirees, along with a college student partner, lead the groups of 10 youth interns in developing and implementing their community projects over the 10 weeks of the program. They provide youth with planning advice, resources, connections to other collaborators, and even technical knowledge that draws on their careers with the company (an engineer helping design a play structure for a community park, for example). The alumni also get ample opportunities to engage their interns in conversations about career paths, their own work experiences (both in the company and beyond), and the life lessons they have learned along the way.

The program spurs the engagement of retirees by asking newly retired executives to act as champions for the program, reaching out to colleagues they worked with over the years to see if they can spend some time over the summer giving back and reconnecting with the company. In fact, it is not uncommon for GM alumni to fly or drive back to the region over the summer months just to participate in this unique experience.

program and the benefits, challenges, and supports they experienced. Other suggestions for company recruitment include all-company emails about the launch and progress of the program, detailing the work of the program in a company newsletter or on a centrally located bulletin board, and including information about the program for new employees during their onboarding process.⁸⁹



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STANDARD 2 - SCREENING

Standard: Screen prospective mentors to determine whether they have the time, commitment, and personal qualities to be a safe and effective mentor. Screen mentees and their parents or guardians about whether the prospective mentees have the time, commitment, and desire to be effectively mentored.

BENCHMARKS:

Mentor Screening

B.2.1 Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.

- ❑ **Recommendation 1:** The criteria for accepting mentors should include:
 - Guidelines regarding the acceptable jobs or type of work the potential mentor does at the company and position (e.g. entry level only, upper management only, or support staff only);
 - Whether, or under what circumstances, the mentor can be a supervisor of the mentee;
 - Being designated as an “employee in good standing” in terms of their performance and professional relationships as determined by a review by Human Resources; and
 - The motivations necessary to establish a supportive relationship with mentees in the program.

B.2.2 Prospective mentors complete a written application that includes questions designed to help assess their safety and suitability for mentoring a youth.

- ❑ **Recommendation 2:** The written application should include questions about the following topics to determine if mentors are a good fit for the program:
 - Job position and responsibilities, including whether they have a supervisor role within their workplace;
 - Previous experience or training as a supervisor, job coach, personal coach, or mentor;
 - Length of employment at the company; and
 - What the mentor would like to do with the mentee (e.g. projects they may work on together, tasks the mentor will assist the mentee in completing, or activities the mentor and mentee may do together) and how the mentor might fulfill the program or mentee’s goals.

B.2.3 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

- ❑ **Recommendation 3:** The interview should include questions for mentors designed to assess the following aspects of mentor suitability or topics that need to be addressed in mentor training:
 - Enthusiasm and commitment to being a mentor and the mentoring program;
 - Communications skills (clarity of language or instruction, use of open-ended questions, giving feedback and constructive criticism);
 - Motivations for volunteering as a mentor in the program to ensure they are consistent with the goals and values of the program;

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- Attitude towards his or her job activities, career choice, and employer;
- Beliefs about roles and boundaries in workplace mentoring relationships;
- Ability to make a commitment to establishing and maintaining a mentoring relationship with a mentee, especially in terms of their travel or personal schedule and ability to be available during the times they are expected to meet with their mentee; and
- How the mentor expects to work with the mentee to accomplish the mentee's goals and the goals of the mentoring program.

B.2.4 Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on prospective adult mentors, including searching a national criminal records database, along with sex offender and child abuse registries and, when relevant, driving records.

Recommendation 4: Program should work with the partner organizations to determine if implementing this benchmark is applicable to their program, especially if the mentee is an adult and if a background check has already been conducted by the employer and the results are available to the mentoring program to review when determining the acceptability of a prospective mentor. If programs determine it is relevant to conduct a criminal background check on prospective mentors, then the program should also work with partner organizations (e.g. companies, other mentoring programs) to determine if and when any information learned during the background check will be shared with the partner organizations. In addition, programs should determine when and how to notify the prospective mentor that information from the background check might be shared with their employer.

B.2.5 Program conducts reference check interviews with multiple adults who know an applicant (ideally, both personal and professional references) that include questions to help assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

Recommendation 5: Program should conduct at least one reference check with someone who is not employed by the same company as the prospective mentor.

B.2.6 Prospective mentors agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or a minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

No additional recommendations.

B.2.7 Prospective mentors agree in writing to participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentees that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by their mentoring program.

No additional recommendations.

Mentee Screening

B.2.8 Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.

Recommendation 6: The criteria for prospective mentees should include:

- Whether mentees need specific technical or job-related skills to participate as a mentee in the program, and,
- The attitudes and motivations that are needed for mentees to be successful in the program.

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B.2.9 Parent(s)/guardian(s) complete an application or referral form.

- ❑ **Recommendation 7:** Implementation of this benchmark is not required if mentees are 18 years old or older.

B.2.10 Parent(s)/guardian(s) provide informed permission for their child to participate.

- ❑ **Recommendation 8:** Implementation of this benchmark is not required when mentees are 18 years of age or older.

B.2.11 Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or the minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

- ❑ **Recommendation 9:** Involvement of parents/guardians in his practice is not required when mentees are 18 years old or older.

B.2.12 Parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing that mentees participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by the mentoring program.

No additional recommendations.

ENHANCEMENTS:

Mentor Screening

E.2.1 Program utilizes national, fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks.

- ❑ **Recommendation 10:** Programs must work with partner organizations to determine if this

enhancement is relevant to their program, based upon the age of the mentees, the program model, and any background checks that are already conducted by the workplace organization. The program should also work with partner organizations to determine if and when any information learned during the background check will be shared with the partner organizations.

E.2.2 Program conducts at least one home visit of each prospective mentor, especially when the match may be meeting in the mentor's home.

This enhancement is likely not relevant to workplace mentoring.

E.2.3 Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults living in the home of prospective mentors, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries, when the match may meet in mentors' homes.

- ❑ **Recommendation 11:** Program should work with partner organizations to determine if background checks should be conducted on individuals, other than the mentor, who may interact with the mentee at the workplace, especially if the mentee is an adult and if a background check has already been conducted by the employer and the results are available to the mentoring program. The program should also work with partner organizations to determine if and when any information learned during the background checks will be shared with the partner organizations.

E.2.4 School-based programs assess mentors' interest in maintaining contact with their mentees during the summer months (following the close of the academic school year) and offer assistance to matches in maintaining contact.

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This enhancement is not relevant to workplace mentoring programs.

E.2.5 Programs that utilize adult mentors prioritize accepting mentor applicants who are older than college age.

❑ **Recommendation 12:** This program assesses the relevance of this enhancement for their program.

E.2.6 Program uses evidence-based screening tools and practices to identify individuals who have attitudes and beliefs that support safe and effective mentoring relationships.

No additional recommendations.

Mentee Screening

E.2.7 Mentees complete an application (either written or verbally).

❑ **Recommendation 13:** The written application should include questions about the following topics to determine if the mentee is a good fit for the program:

- Previous experience being coached or mentored in a job coaching or mentoring program,
- Length of employment or previous experience at the workplace organization, if relevant,
- Attitudes and motivations that are needed for mentees to be successful in the program. This includes the mentee's motivation to establish a relationship with a mentor and not just focus on developing their own technical or job skills, attitudes towards help-seeking, receiving social support, and openness to receiving feedback, and

- Ability to make a commitment to establishing and maintaining a mentoring relationship with a mentor especially in terms of their schedule and ability to be available during the times they are expected to meet with their mentor.

E.2.8 Mentees provide written assent agreeing to participate in their mentoring program.

No additional recommendations.

JUSTIFICATION

The screening practices outlined in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* serve to determine whether a mentor will be safe and reliable, to ensure that mentees and their families meet the eligibility and participation requirements, and to gather information that can inform the matching process. Unfortunately, no studies were located that tested the effectiveness or compared specific screening practices relevant to workplace mentoring programs. However, there are conclusions that can be drawn from practices described in the workplace mentoring literature that inform the recommendations below.

Workplace mentoring programs have some unique challenges because they are often embedded within a workplace, which can result in competing demands on both mentors and mentees in the program. Mentors and mentees must be prepared to engage in a meaningful mentoring relationship in the context of the expectations of the workplace. Even when programs are not located at a workplace, employees are often mentoring during worktime hours, which can lead to similar challenges such as availability and competing demands. Thus, many of the screening recommendations for workplace programs attempt to mitigate some of the challenges associated with these competing

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expectations by screening mentors and mentees to determine if they have the background, attitudes, goals, and approach to mentoring that will promote an effective mentoring relationship.

MENTOR SCREENING

The recommendations regarding mentor screening for workplace programs emphasize establishing criteria and gathering information about the background, motivations, and potential approach of prospective mentors.

Mentor Background Considerations

Unique to workplace mentoring programs is that they are often embedded within companies that have many different types of jobs, some of which are directly related to the overall mission of the company, such as software engineers who work for a technology company. Other jobs may be more generic, such as accountants who help manage the company's finances. Each of these jobs require a unique set of knowledge and skills. Workplace mentoring programs must carefully consider the goals of the program and the outcomes they hope to achieve in mentees and create criteria for accepting or rejecting mentors based on whose job tasks and skills best fit with the program goals and desired outcomes (**Recommendation 1**).

Workplace mentoring programs must also determine whether mentors can be a direct supervisor of the mentee. Some considerations when making this decision include the heightened potential for role conflicts and boundary issues such as excessive monitoring of the mentee, perceived preferential treatment of the mentee by others reporting to the supervisor, and potential conflicts of interest when making decisions about pay raises, performance evaluation ratings, and

job assignments, if the mentor is also the mentee's supervisor.^{1,2} On the other hand, several studies have found that when the mentee has a direct reporting relationship with the mentor, this can increase the amount of contact between the partners, facilitating the development of the relationship.^{3,4,5} Furthermore, a mentor who is closer in rank to the mentee may be better able to relate to the mentee's position and role within the organization compared to a mentor who is several levels higher than the mentee. And one study reported no differences in reports of negative mentoring experiences when comparing matches in which the mentor was a supervisor to matches in which the mentor was not the supervisor.⁶ Another study found no effect of the relative position or rank of formal mentors on mentees' perceptions of relationship quality and job attitudes.⁷

Given these findings, there is reason to have some concern about the dual roles of supervisors serving as mentors; however, many programs do allow mentors to supervise mentees. When programs have clear policies and procedures for screening mentors who may be in both roles to ensure they have the qualities necessary to be an effective mentor in the program, then programs should feel more comfortable allowing mentors to be the supervisor of their mentee. This issue is also discussed further in the Matching Standard, which provides guidance regarding how mentor rank should be considered when making matches.

Finally, prospective mentors in workplace mentoring programs should be considered in "good standing" by the human resources department of the company in order to be considered as a mentor. The definition of "good standing" may vary from company to company but should include aspects

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of the employee's work performance as well as their professional relationships. Employees in “bad standing” may be on probation or have some disciplinary action against them. Programs must determine how this information will be gathered from the company and how it will be documented for each prospective mentor.

Consideration of Mentors' Motivations for Mentoring

There are many facets to a prospective mentors' motivations for mentoring and there are some unique aspects of mentor motivations that must be considered by workplace programs **(Recommendation 1)**. First, mentors should be highly motivated to mentor^{8, 9} based on a desire to help support their mentee, as opposed to only helping their own career, because they feel pressured, or because they were required by a supervisor to do so.^{10, 11}

In addition, workplace mentors should be motivated to develop a personal, supportive relationship with their mentee that goes beyond just teaching job skills—our review of the literature made a clear case that the quality of the mentoring relationship is a key ingredient in the success of formal, workplace mentoring relationships.¹² One concern with workplace mentors is that they might be more likely to have goal-focused approach to the mentoring relationship or be focused on developing specific skills in their mentee. This concern is rooted, in part, in the embedded nature of workplace mentoring programs within the workplace, which is inherently task and goal focused. This approach could be appropriate based on the goals, duration, and desired outcomes of the mentoring program (and the goals of the mentee). However, in most circumstances, mentors should be screened

to determine if they will be able to prioritize establishing a supportive relationship with their mentee in service of more goal-directed activities and outcomes—the two are not mutually exclusive.

Mentoring programs should therefore establish what motivations are important for mentors to possess and then develop procedures regarding how to gather information about these motivations during the screening process. These procedures may include application, survey, or interview questions designed to gather information about the prospective mentors' motivations. Programs might also consider identifying specific motivations that would screen out potential mentors, but should also keep in mind that motivations can be diverse and can be positively influenced through mentor training and ongoing support.¹³ When mentors have multiple, positive motivations for volunteering with the program—such as the desire to establish a supportive relationship with their mentee and help the mentee achieve their goals, to have a fun experience at work, teach the mentee good work habits, or support the company's efforts to give back to the community—then they are more likely to have an effective relationship. In conclusion, identifying and training mentors about the value of developing a close, supportive mentoring relationship is a recommended practice for all mentoring programs but is given special emphasis for workplace mentoring due to the ease with which relationships can become task-focused.

Mentor Application and Interview

Written applications for mentors should gather information that will assist programs in determining if the mentor meets the criteria established by the program, as well as inform the matching of mentors and mentees. For example, asking

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prospective mentors about their current job position, responsibilities, and supervisory roles allows program staff to determine if they will match a mentee with a mentor who would also be their supervisor **(Recommendation 2)**.

Whether the mentor has previous experience in a role that involved supervising, mentoring, or coaching a young person or colleague should be included in the application. Previous research has established that when mentors have experience in a helping profession, they are more likely to be an effective mentor.^{14, 15} Thus, mentoring programs may choose to prioritize selecting and matching prospective mentors who have some previous experience or training in a role similar to that of a mentor.

Mentor expectations are a powerful factor in the success of mentoring relationships¹⁶ and mentors will likely have some important expectations about many aspects of their participation in the mentoring program, including what they expect they will do with their mentee and how these activities will impact their ability to do their own job. Thus, the mentor application should include questions about what the mentor expects to do with the mentee, such as providing advice and support to the mentee through less structured meetings or whether the mentor expects to help support the mentee in developing specific workplace-related skills and completing projects or tasks together. This information should be used to determine if the mentor is a good fit based on the goals and desired outcomes of the program. In addition, program staff can use this information to inform the questions asked during the mentor screening interview and may decide to address the mentor's expectations about activities during mentor training, particularly

if those expectations may not match the likely experience.

Interviewing Mentors

The face-to-face interview with prospective mentors provides additional information that is difficult to capture from only the written application and can greatly help determine the suitability to be a mentor in the program. In particular, prospective mentors' enthusiasm, attitudes, motivations, commitment, approach to mentoring, and communication skills should be addressed during the interview **(Recommendation 3)**.

Mentor attitudes that should be probed during the interview include attitudes about their job, career, and employer, and their enthusiasm and commitment to mentoring. These attitudes should be overall positive and realistic about both the workplace and the potential mentoring experience. Overly positive attitudes could be addressed in mentor training to help ensure that mentors do not have unrealistic expectations or paint an unrealistic picture of work life for their mentee. Negative attitudes, however, might be difficult to address during training, particularly negative attitudes about the workplace and these attitudes could interfere with the development of an effective mentoring relationship.

As described in the Introduction, workplace mentors are often asked to take on many different, sometimes contradictory, roles and responsibilities. For example, being a friend to their mentee while also providing feedback to mentees regarding their performance in the workplace. Thus, the mentor's communication skills are commonly recommended as a screening criteria for workplace mentoring programs.¹⁷



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One particular concern from the practitioners in this project's Working Group is that mentors must be able to meet the minimum participatory requirements of the program and that volunteers should be asked throughout the screening, training, and matching process to consider whether their work travel, personal plans, and work project timelines will interfere with their availability to be a mentor in the program. When mentors are not able to meet the minimum meeting length and frequency requirements of the program, there can be negative consequences for relationship and, ultimately, mentee outcomes.¹⁸ The interview provides an opportunity for mentoring program staff to evaluate whether the prospective mentor will be able to commit to the mentoring relationship, both emotionally and logistically. Interview questions might pose specific scenarios to mentors to gain insights into how the mentor might handle various situations when a conflict arises to help evaluate the potential mentor's priorities and level of commitment. The interview is also an opportunity for mentoring program staff to address any concerns of the mentor such as how the mentoring relationship might impact the mentor's work, how to integrate the mentee with other team members in the workplace, and what types of support to expect from the mentoring program and company for the mentoring relationship.

Carefully Consider Background Check Policies and Procedures

As with any mentoring program, workplace mentoring programs that involve an adult mentoring a minor must conduct a criminal background check to help ensure the safety of the children and adolescents involved in the program—even if the mentor and mentee will always be supervised

during their meetings. Background checks within workplace mentoring programs require some additional considerations **(Recommendation 4)**. The primary concern regarding background checks within workforce programs is about information sharing: whether background check information about a prospective mentor that is already available to the employer will be shared with the organization or individuals responsible for screening mentors, how information learned during a background check may be shared with the employer or other organizations, and how the prospective mentor will be informed about information learned during a background check. Based on feedback from the Working Group members on this project, most programs obtain consent from prospective mentors to conduct a background check but typically have policies that the information learned from the background check will not be shared with anyone, including the employer themselves in the case of a brand-new check, and will only be used to make a decision about the person's suitability to be a mentor in the program.

MENTEE SCREENING

As with mentor screening, the recommended mentee screening procedures emphasize establishing criteria for selecting mentees that will best fit the program's goals and requirements **(Recommendation 6)**. Workplace mentoring programs vary widely in their expectations for the skills that mentees should have going into their experience with the program. Some programs, such as internships and work-based learning programs, expect mentees to already have mastery of specific skills in order to fully participate in the tasks of their "workplace." Whereas other programs, particularly career exploration or short-term work shadow

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: THE ROLE OF MENTAL TOUGHNESS IN DETERMINING WHO GETS INTO A PROGRAM CYCLE

YouthBuild mentoring coordinators begin each program year by providing an orientation to all youth enrolled in the YouthBuild program. This orientation is part of the standard YouthBuild enrollment process, which includes our initial Mental Toughness training. Although this is an ideal time to present on the mentoring program, programs also recognize that students may express interest in being mentored throughout the year.

The Mental Toughness period plays an important role in the YouthBuild model, though, as it helps identify youth who are ready to take on the demands of being a YouthBuild student while also providing a bit of the flavor of what the overall experience will be like. The reality is that young people get referred to or sign up to participate in YouthBuild for a variety of reasons and not all of them will be ready to take on the challenge of completing school, learning a trade, and working on personal development all at once. Knowing that there are limited spaces in the program each year, Mental Toughness plays a critical role in ensuring that those spaces are given to youth who are ready to put in the effort and who have the communication skills, temperament, and maturity to succeed in the program.

The Mental Toughness period lasts between one and two weeks at most sites and involves a variety of training and team-building exercises, fun activities, and introductions to the demands of the program. Youth who do not pass Mental Toughness are always invited to return and try again and are given feedback about what they can work on to improve their chances of being accepted. This process ensures that the students who are accepted are going to be safe, responsible, and ready to handle the challenges that come from being on a construction site, as well as in getting back into the classroom and completing important academic work. These youth are also often ready for the role of a mentor in their lives.

This initial YouthBuild Mental Toughness (YBMT) orientation covers:

- Why a young person would want a mentor.
- How mentoring can enhance the YouthBuild experience (highlight increased social networking, access to more opportunities to learn and advance their careers, individualized help in reaching goals, and the fact that mentoring should last past graduation for extra mentee support).
- When and where matches meet and what typical mentoring activities look like.
- Mentee responsibilities for participation (frequency of meetings, duration of match, data-collection responsibilities, program rules of conduct).
- The next steps in signing up for the mentoring program (permission forms, etc.).

At many of the established YBMT sites, past mentoring participants are invited back to help refine and deliver the orientations to new YouthBuild students. Many of these youth also come back specifically to serve as mentors, knowing exactly how valuable that role can be in helping a young person succeed in the program.



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programs, are likely to have fewer expectations for the existing technical or job-related skills of mentees.

Also, in alignment with the mentor screening recommendations, programs should establish criteria outlining the mentee attitudes and motivations that are critical for success in the program. Despite their perceived lower levels of power in the mentoring relationship, mentees exert significant influence in the success or failure of a mentoring relationship through their attitudes and approach toward it.¹⁹ No previous research was located that describes the specific mentee attitudes and motivations that are more likely to lead to successful workplace mentoring relationships; however, it has been recommended that mentees should be highly motivated and excited to participate in the program, eager to learn new things, and open to constructive criticism.^{20, 21} They should not be solely motivated by the potential for a future job at the workplace or by any monetary incentive provided to mentees in the program. Programs should carefully consider what mentee attitudes and motivations are critical for success in the mentoring program and establish procedures for determining if a mentee possesses the relevant attitudes and motivations. For one example of how a program can assess youth motivations and readiness for the mentoring experience, see the following box on YouthBuild USA's Mental Toughness portion of the program.

Special Instructions for Programs Involving Adult Mentees

Many workplace mentoring programs target mentees who are 18 or older to expose them to job opportunities or to provide new employee onboarding. For these programs, there are

several mentee screening recommendations that are not relevant for mentoring programs which serve mentees who are 18 years or older (**Recommendations 7, 8, and 9**). That being said, there may be specific programs or situations in which workplace mentoring programs would require a parent or guardian of a mentee who is 18 years or older to complete an application, provide informed permission, or agree in writing to the time commitment requirements of the program, such as when the mentee is dependent on the parent or guardian for transportation to the workplace mentoring program.

ENHANCEMENTS

The mentor and mentee screening enhancement recommendations provide some additional nuance and context to the existing screening enhancements given the unique contexts of workplace mentoring.

Additional Mentors Screening Recommendations

Two of the mentor screening enhancement recommendations provide additional guidance on mentor background checks (**Recommendations 10 and 11**). Workplace mentoring programs must determine if their program should conduct an FBI background check and/or consider background checks for other individuals that may interact with mentees in the workplace. If a workplace mentoring program places mentees in more than one company or works with a particularly vulnerable population of youth, they may have different policies regarding background checks for each company and based on the different mentee populations they serve. Programs should develop written policies and procedures outlining the requirements for additional background checks on mentors and

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others that interact with mentees. Further, as with the recommendations described above under the mentor screening benchmark, workplace programs must carefully consider how and whether background check information is shared with everyone involved.

Mentee Application

The mentee screening recommendations mirror those for mentor applications, specifically the goal of obtaining information about the mentee's background, attitudes, and motivations in order to evaluate the potential mentee's suitability for the program and inform the matching process **(Recommendation 13)**. One potential challenge for workplace mentoring programs is the requirement that mentees be available on a very consistent basis for established meeting times at the workplace. When mentees are not available or do not attend these meetings, it can have a significant impact on the mentoring relationship and the effectiveness of the mentoring program (and potentially of the job site itself if the youth is creating real work product). Although it is difficult to guarantee that mentees will be able to follow through with their commitment to the mentoring program, the mentee application should include questions and scenarios designed to better assess the extent to which the mentee is committed to developing and maintaining a mentoring relationship and how the mentee will handle situations when they may not be able to attend mentoring meetings—including how likely that might be based on other circumstances in their life. Some programs may want to consider requiring a mentee interview during the screening process to allow for a more in-depth discussion about the mentee's goals, motivations, commitment, and ability to meet the program requirements. This

experience will also give potential mentees a chance to practice this skill.

The unique screening recommendations described above for workplace mentoring programs aim to help programs think carefully about who can best benefit from the mentoring program and what skills, attitudes, and approaches are needed by mentors and mentees to help them be successful in the program. We encourage programs to document these decision points and criteria in both policy and procedure. Done with intentionality, the screening of mentors and mentees sets the stage for matching and provides information that can be leveraged by program staff during the training and monitoring and support of matches.



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STANDARD 3 - TRAINING

Standard: Train prospective mentors, mentees, and mentees' parents (or legal guardians or responsible adult) in the basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to build an effective and safe mentoring relationship using culturally appropriate language and tools.

BENCHMARKS:

Mentor Training

B.3.1 Program provides a minimum of two hours of pre-match, in-person, mentor training.

No additional recommendations.

B.3.2 Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics:

a. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing, being late to meetings, and match termination).

❑ **Recommendation 1:** Program will train mentors in any job-related requirements in the mentoring program.

b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentee, parent or guardian, and the mentoring relationship.

❑ **Recommendation 2:** Program will train mentors to:

- Help their mentees to identify their educational and professional goals;
- Articulate their own goals for their mentoring relationships, and ensure that mentors' goals include relationship development and not just instrumental or job performance goals; and

- Support their mentees, who may be unfamiliar with workplace norms, so that their mentees will successfully integrate into the company culture and learn professional norms more generally.

c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles.

❑ **Recommendation 3:** Program provides training to mentors about the unique obligations and roles associated with being a workplace mentor, as well as how to balance providing their mentees with both emotional support and job performance feedback.

d. Relationship development and maintenance.

❑ **Recommendation 4:** Program provides training to mentors on the importance of relationship development and maintenance, especially given issues related to the context of mentoring in a workplace.

e. Ethical and safety issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship.

❑ **Recommendation 5:** Program should train mentors to contact a designated staff person at the mentoring program immediately when faced with an ethical or safety dilemma.

❑ **Recommendation 6:** Program should train mentors on potential ethical dilemmas that may arise related to having dual roles with their mentees.

f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.

❑ **Recommendation 7:** Program should train mentors about how to close their mentoring relationship with their mentee, especially if their mentee is hired as an employee at the company when the



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mentoring program ends.

g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.

❑ **Recommendation 8:** Program should train mentors about whether assistance will be available to them during the mentoring program, who will provide the assistance, and whether monitoring, support, and advice provided to mentors will be kept confidential or will be shared with the employer.

h. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of youth (e.g., children with an incarcerated parent, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.

❑ **Recommendation 9:** Program should provide mentor with training about their roles and responsibilities in collaborating with other service providers. For example, if the mentee is involved in juvenile justice or social services system, then the mentor may be considered as part of a wrap-around team, and may be expected to communicate and collaborate with team members.

❑ **Recommendation 10:** Program should provide training to mentors on providing support to diverse populations of youth, recognizing their own cultural biases, and how to teach their mentee about workplace culture, behavior, and professionalism.

❑ **Recommendation 11:** Program should train mentors in strategies to prepare the workplace and co-workers to welcome mentees, so that the workplace is a comfortable and appropriate setting for young people to work and learn.

i. Initiating the mentoring relationship.

❑ **Recommendation 12:** Program should provide mentors with training on focusing initially in the mentoring relationship on relationship development rather than giving their mentees work to do immediately, especially if assigning work or tasks to mentees is part of the mentoring program.

j. Developing an effective, positive relationship with mentee's family, if relevant.

❑ **Recommendation 13:** Program should provide mentors with training on developing a relationship with the mentee's parents/guardians related to their child's professional development, such as how parents/guardians can help mentees advance in their education or careers, how to communicate effectively with parents/guardians about the mentee's performance or next steps; and making sure that parents/guardians are invited to the closure ceremony or party.

B.3.3 Program provides pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

a. Appropriate physical contact

b. Contact with mentoring program (e.g., who to contact, when to contact)

c. Relationship monitoring requirements (e.g., response time, frequency, schedule)

d. Approved activities

e. Mandatory reporting requirements associated with suspected child abuse or neglect, and suicidality and homicidality



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f. Confidentiality and anonymity

❑ **Recommendation 14:** Program should provide mentors with training on challenges to maintaining confidentiality about their mentee and their mentoring relationship in the workplace, as well as how to handle information shared by their mentees in confidence that may affect their mentee's job performance.

g. Digital and social media use

h. Overnight visits and out-of-town travel

i. Money spent on mentee and mentoring activities

j. Transportation

k. Emergency and crisis situation procedures

l. Health and medical care

m. Discipline

❑ **Recommendation 15:** Program should provide mentors with training on how to handle incidents involving mentee's violating company rules or regulations.

n. Substance use

o. Firearms and weapons

p. Inclusion of others in match meetings (e.g., siblings, mentee's friends)

q. Photo and image use

r. Evaluation and use of data

s. Other program relevant topics

❑ **Recommendation 16:** Program should provide mentors with training on the proper use of company equipment, as well as whether and how to train mentees on the proper use of equipment.

❑ **Recommendation 17:** Program should provide mentors with training on how to prepare their mentees for any lockdown or emergency re-

sponse procedures.

B.3.4 Program uses training practices and materials that are informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated.

No additional recommendations.

ENHANCEMENTS:

Mentor Training

E.3.1 Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more.

❑ **Recommendation 18:** Program should provide at least four hours of additional pre-match training beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more.

E.3.2 Program addresses the following post-match training topics:

a. How developmental functioning may affect the mentoring relationship

b. How culture, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and other demographic characteristics of the mentor and mentee may affect the mentoring relationship

❑ **Recommendation 19:** Program should train mentors about how the mentor's and mentee's cultural identity; background; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; race; religion; socioeconomic status; disability status; or other demographic characteristics may affect the mentoring relationship, job status, and career development, and how to manage these issues, if they arise.

❑ **Recommendation 20:** Program should provide mentors with training in how to help and support



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their mentees when their mentees are faced with challenges in the workplace related to the mentees' job skills; job knowledge; cultural identity or background; gender; gender identity; sexual orientation; race; religion; socioeconomic status; disability status; or other demographic characteristics.

- c. Topics tailored to the needs and characteristics of the mentee
- d. Closure procedures

E.3.3 Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability to be a mentor and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

No additional recommendations.

Mentee Training

E.3.4 Program provides training for the mentee on the following topics:

- a. Purpose of mentoring
 - ❑ **Recommendation 21:** Program should clearly define the purpose and goals of their mentoring program, particularly related to mentee employment and career advancement.
- b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)
- c. Mentees' goals for mentoring
 - ❑ **Recommendation 22:** Program should train mentees on how to build an identity in their new role as a worker, in general, and in a particular career or profession.

- d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
 - ❑ **Recommendation 23:** Program train mentees about other sources of support within the company or program in addition to the mentor.
- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles
 - ❑ **Recommendation 24:** Program should train mentees to identify potential relationships with other co-workers in addition to their relationship with their mentor to help them build skills and advance their career goals.
- f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
- g. Initiating the mentoring relationship
- h. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship

E.3.5 Program provides training for the mentee on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served: (see B.3.3 for full list of recommended risk management topics)

- ❑ **Recommendation 25:** Program should train and prepare mentees for any lockdown or emergency response procedures.
- ❑ **Recommendation 26:** Program should train mentees on workplace safety issues and the proper use of equipment at the worksite.

Parent or Guardian Training

E.3.6 Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics: (see E.3.4 for full list of topics suggested for mentees, which are also applicable here for parent/guardian training)



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❑ **Recommendation 27:** Program should provide parent training on the goals, methods, and requirements of the program as well as how parents can support the mentoring relationship, if the mentee is 18 years of age or younger or if parents/guardians are involved in the workplace program.

E.3.7 Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served: (see B.3.3 for full list of recommended risk management topics)

No additional recommendations.

Company Co-worker Training

New E.3.8 WORKPLACE: Program provides training to co-workers of the mentors about the mentoring program, especially those who may be interacting with the mentee in the workplace.

JUSTIFICATION

Mentor training has consistently been found to be associated with better match and youth outcomes; thus, workplace mentoring programs should plan to consistently implement all of the training benchmark practices described in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (4th Ed.). In addition, this chapter describes a set of new related recommendations for mentor training that were primarily developed based upon descriptions of effective workplace mentoring programs in the practice literature, as well as suggestions from this project's Working Group. In addition, some training recommendations have been added with respect to training within the broader company environment. Given the additional training needs of workplace

mentors and the universally voiced advice from this project's Working Group, **Recommendation 18** suggests that mentor training last for a minimum of six hours in order to address all of the additional topics added to this Standard. In addition, mentee, parent, and coworker training needs and topics are discussed in this section of the Supplement.

Clarifying Program Practices and Sources of Support with Mentors

There are many nuances in the content of workplace mentor training associated with the core pre-match training topics in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* that appear in Benchmark 3.2. Mentors need information not only about general program requirements, but as **Recommendation 1** suggests, they also need training on practical matters such as the program schedule (e.g., weekdays), duration (e.g., typically a calendar or academic year in community-based mentoring programs with youth), location (e.g., company office, offsite jobsite), compensation (e.g., miss work to mentor or receive paid release time), and structure (e.g., use of a curriculum) of mentoring meetings. This is particularly important in workplace mentoring because presumably the mentoring will occur during the workday and mentors need to know whether they will be paid for their time as part of their regular work responsibilities, or if the time spent mentoring is considered vacation time or has to be made up. Because new volunteers wouldn't necessarily know the rationale for different types of program requirements such as these, addressing these topics provides a good opportunity to explain how the program requirements are related to the purpose of the program and the goals of the company.¹ As suggested across volunteer programs, workplace mentoring programs need to be clear

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about their program requirements right from the beginning in training to avoid mentors having unmet expectations, becoming disappointed, and quitting prematurely.²

In addition to training on required program practices, mentors also need to be trained on when to seek support and who to contact. Since mentors are volunteers, they need to know what resources are available to help them if they face challenges in their mentoring relationship or if their mentee is facing challenges in the workplace that extend beyond the knowledge or expertise of the mentor. Thus, **Recommendation 8** suggests that programs should train mentors about whether assistance will be available to them during the program, who will provide the assistance, and whether this assistance will be kept confidential (and the boundaries of confidentiality). Also, since eligibility to participate in a mentoring program may include having some form of risk status due to family background or personal characteristics, participants may come to the mentoring program embedded with a team of other service providers who may want to coordinate their goals, plans, and activities with mentors. Thus, **Recommendation 9** suggests that programs should train mentors in their roles and responsibilities related to collaborating with other service providers (e.g., juvenile justice system, social services, wraparound teams). Having some basic knowledge of the relevant partner agency could be instrumental in mentees' being successful in the workplace.

Train Mentors to Identify and Communicate about Their Goals and Expectations

In all mentoring programs, it is important for mentors to identify their own goals and

expectations for their mentee and mentoring relationship, and, if relevant, for their relationship with their mentee's parent or guardian. Goals for mentees can include growth in areas such as behavioral, social/interpersonal, emotional, educational, vocational, or extracurricular development; however, in workplace mentoring, because the program is situated in the workplace, program goals typically center around job skills training, educational plans and adjustment, and career development. Thus, mentors will likely have expectations and goals that are focused on the transition, and attitudinal and behavioral adjustment to a workplace setting, as well as nurturing educational and career growth goals. However, as suggested in **Recommendation 2**, mentor training should not only encourage mentors to become conscious of their own goals, but also, to learn about their mentee's goals for themselves and the mentoring relationship. Then, mentors and mentees can co-create realistic, shared goals for both the mentee and the relationship.

Because mentors are also often expected to train their mentees in specific job skills in a workplace mentoring programs, it is even more important for matches to receive training in how to identify and articulate goals for their relationship and not solely focus on the job performance of the mentee. As part of this training, mentors also can learn about how to support their mentees, who may be unfamiliar with workplace norms, so that their mentees will successfully integrate into the company culture and build their skills around professionalism and workplace behavior in general.³ Taken together, by each person articulating their own goals and then, discussing them, matches can use a collaborative process to give their relationship direction and purpose.

We also found examples in our literature review of programs that tried to reduce the amount of goal identification and negotiation that mentors and youth needed to do as their relationship was getting started, often by using a set curriculum of some kind that gave the match a beginning structure that mentors and youth could then add to with other goals and projects that they decided on together. For a great example of one such program that uses a structured curriculum to ensure that youth are building core competencies, while also making this an easier lift for mentors, see the boxes below about the use of weekly lessons and activities in the Spark program.

TRAIN MENTORS TO BALANCE JOB-RELATED ROLE REQUIREMENTS WITH A FOCUS ON RELATIONSHIP DEVELOPMENT

A fundamental component of preparing a volunteer to be a mentor is to be sure that expected mentors' behaviors toward mentees are clearly defined in terms of the roles that are appropriate and inappropriate to play. Given the complexities of working together—mentors are simultaneously serving as supporters, advisers, connectors, and role models—role definition in workplace mentoring programs is uniquely essential for both mentors and mentees in these programs. For example, mentors in the workplace often must balance multiple goals including those that are pragmatic and instrumental (e.g., teaching the mentee how to use job-specific software) as well as those focused on providing their mentees with psychosocial support (e.g., making sure the mentee feels like part of the team). Workplace mentors tend to be motivated by providing mentees with career development support and job-skills training, as well as helping them with psychosocial support in navigating a new

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: USING CURRICULUM TO GUIDE THE WORK OF MENTORS AND YOUTH IN THE SPARK PROGRAM

One of Spark's key priorities is providing employee mentors with a gradual on ramp to the mentoring experience. Both first time and returning mentors appreciate the support of a turnkey curriculum that prompts group activities and one-to-one discussion, as well as the support of onsite staff facilitation in helping mentors feel confident in building rapport with mentees.

Each week the Spark curriculum provides mentors and students with activities and discussion points that are aligned with specific skills related to socioemotional development and social capital. Specific skills include goal setting, networking, teamwork, growth mindset, and public speaking, among others. Each week's materials define the skill and provide discussion prompts and an activity the mentoring pairs can work on together. It also then encourages them to apply the skill to their chosen career exploration project.

Spark understands the careful balance of giving mentors the structure they need to feel supported without feeling stifled by the curriculum. By structuring the pairs' work around skill building related to the student's career interest project, Spark creates space for both autonomy and guidance. Spark's goal is for mentors to feel supported and to allow them to focus on relationship-building with the student instead of preparation for each session. The curriculum also encourages students and mentors to be creative and explore key topics in a way that still feels personalized to their unique experience.



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interpersonal workplace environment.^{4, 5} Mentors can also provide career support by acting as a sponsor for their mentees, advocating for them within the company, and seeking opportunities for them to grow and develop.

Because of the potential complexities that could result in boundary violations and interpersonal conflict, **Recommendation 3** addresses the importance of clarifying the unique obligations and roles associated with being a mentor in a workplace mentoring program. This training should primarily include how to balance providing mentees with both emotional and psychosocial support while also providing career and job training. Furthermore, mentors need to know if they are expected to provide job performance feedback to their mentees and if so, receive training in how to give constructive feedback delivered in ways that support their mentees' learning and perceived self-competence.^{6, 7} In addition, mentors need to know whether they will be expected to evaluate the performance of their mentees on the job and if so, how frequently these evaluations will be expected to occur. Thus, **Recommendation 15** suggests that programs should train mentors on how to handle incidents when mentees have broken company rules or regulations. Procedures will need to be in place and communicated to mentors regarding who would handle disciplinary proceedings involving mentees. In general, mentors should not be in the position of having to discipline their mentees, even if the mentor is the mentee's job supervisor, because of the damage it would likely cause to their mentoring relationship. Workplace mentoring programs will need to clearly think through the pros and cons of setting up dual relationships involving both mentoring and job supervising, because of the challenges that they will create for developing

enduring, close, positive, trusting relationships. Consistent with **Recommendation 6**, mentors will need training on potential ethical dilemmas that may arise related to having dual roles with their mentees, if the program is designed for mentors to take on dual roles. Examples of such dilemmas include criticizing the work of mentees, while trying to support their feelings of self-efficacy in the workplace; assigning easy work to the mentee and more challenging work to others, which can create jealousy among coworkers; giving the mentee light criticism, while being harsh with other supervisees; promoting mentees to work on projects that they are unqualified to do.

TRAIN MENTORS ABOUT RELATIONSHIP INITIATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND CLOSURE

While workforce mentoring programs are designed to provide job skills and career guidance to mentees, the most important factor related to the success of the mentoring relationship remains the quality of the personal relationship between mentor and mentee. Ensuring that mentors and mentees develop a trusting, personal bond should be the program's primary concern, as this is the factor most directly associated with match quality and duration. Theoretically, high socially skilled mentors should be better able to provide their mentees with engaging and productive mentoring relationships, and the pair will be more likely to build a trusting, enduring match.⁸ Thus, **Recommendation 4** (training mentors on issues related to relationship development in the workplace) and **Recommendation 12** (training on the sequencing of focusing initially on the mentoring relationship before focusing on assigning work to mentees) speak to the primacy of building the relationship first over other goals. Mentors



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with stronger interpersonal skills are better able to maintain more successful matches with their mentees.⁹ Thus, training topics should include learning and practicing the social skills that are related to the different forms of support expected to be provided by a workplace mentor.^{10, 11} Programs should guide mentors on how to initiate a personal relationship with their mentee, how to build trust, and how to manage issues that may arise over the course of the relationship that may threaten the trust the match has built.¹² Given that it can take up to three months to establish a trusting relationship between mentors and mentees,¹³ mentors need to learn to be patient as their relationship develops over time. One consequence of a long onramp to establishing close, positive mentoring relationships is that programs may train mentors to avoid assigning major work duties during the startup phase, in order to focus more time and attention on relationship development.

Training on relationship development and maintenance should also include preparing mentors for how to handle relationship closure, as noted in **Recommendation 7**. This topic is described in detail in “Closure,” one of the last chapters in this supplement. If one or more mentees are hired by the company at the conclusion of the mentoring program, mentors need training in how to discuss this topic with their mentees, whether their mentee received a job offer or not. Either way, closure can be complicated. If mentees remain in the workplace after the program ends, mentors need to understand how their mentoring program would like the mentoring relationship to evolve over time with former mentees. Because mentoring in workplace programs is focused on career development, programs need to also decide and train mentors in what types of continuing contact with mentees

are allowed, or even encouraged, when the program ends. Mentees will continue to need assistance making decisions around their education, internships, job choices, and skills training; receiving letters of recommendation for applications to education programs or jobs; evaluating job-related tools such as résumés; learning to be a manager or supervisor; and handling interpersonal or human resources issues in the workplace. Maintaining some form of relationship with former mentors can be very beneficial to mentees over the course of their careers, and mentors will need guidance on navigating these situations and post-program asks.

ETHICS, SAFETY, AND RISK MANAGEMENT TRAINING FOR MENTORS

The workplace poses a unique set of circumstances under which to form a successful mentoring relationship. Matches must work to build their relationships while accounting for a number of potential conflicts. As discussed in the section on roles and boundaries, one of these potential conflicts may be tension between the mentors’ role as employees in their company and their role as trusted advisers to their mentees. Programs should work to relieve this tension for their mentors, which may arise as the demands of their job duties may conflict with the demands of maintaining their mentoring relationships. Mentors need training to defer to their manager or supervisor in any situation in which they feel their role as an employee may come into conflict with their role as a mentor. Thus, **Recommendations 5** (train mentors to immediately contact a designated staff person when faced with an ethical or safety dilemma) **and 6**, (mentioned previously, which involves training mentors on potential ethical dilemmas that may arise related to having conflicting roles with their

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mentees) address procedures for handling this and other ethical dilemmas, and the critical role of the mentoring program in facilitating solutions. Similarly, **Recommendations 8** (train mentors about where they can go for advice and support) **and 9** (train mentors on collaborating with other community-based agencies and service providers related to the well-being of their mentees) focus on the supports mentors will have to help them address the needs of their mentees, as well as what protocols to follow when faced with complex decisions about their mentees' health and well-being.

Mentors may also face conflicts within their mentoring relationships. Some mentors may serve as both a supervisor to their mentees, being responsible for assuring the quality of their mentees' work, as well as responsible for their mentee's emotional, social, and behavioral adjustment in the workplace. **Recommendation 6** suggests that programs address this type of potential conflict of interest in their mentor training. Training could explore potential scenarios in the workplace involving outcomes of decisions that may be in the best interests of mentees, but not in the best interests of the company. For example, if mentors give preferential treatment to their mentees, it might come at the expense of the other people supervised by the mentor. This type of treatment would further present a problem if a mentee is assigned to a high-profile project that may advance the mentee's career, but for which they may not be qualified.

Mentors may also find themselves in a bind if or when a mentee shares personal information in confidence that may have implications for their role in the company. Because mentors will serve as trusted confidants to their mentees, a mentee may share information in confidence that could impact

the mentee's standing in the company. To provide mentors with tools to manage potential conflicts such as these, **Recommendation 14** suggests that workplace mentoring programs train mentors on challenges to maintaining confidentiality about their mentee and their mentoring relationship in the workplace, as well as how to handle information shared by their mentees in confidence that may affect their mentee's job performance.

The workplace can also pose a variety of safety hazards for which both mentors and mentees will need to be prepared. Programs should ensure mentees are well-trained on how to respond appropriately during an emergency in the workplace. Consistent with this general suggestion, **Recommendation 17** suggests that mentors need to be trained on how to prepare their mentees for any lockdown or emergency response procedures and then, in **Recommendation 25**, mentees also need to be trained on the lockdown or emergency procedures.

Mentors will need to have expertise in their line of work in order to best support their mentees, as they "learn the ropes" at the company. Mentees may enter the workplace with varying degrees of experience or competence in the duties to which they will be assigned and the skills that are required for success; mentors must be able to work with mentees at all levels, in order to provide them with a positive experience. Mentoring programs operating externally from the company may want to ensure mentors possess full command of the skills and knowledge of the equipment the mentees will be using; for programs operating within the company, they may want to provide mentors with supplemental training on relevant skills and equipment to guarantee that mentees will be safe,

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as well as have the resources needed to perform.

Recommendation 16 suggests that programs provide training on these topics to mentors, and, potentially, to also train mentors on how to train mentees on the proper use of equipment at the work site.

Mentors and the host company will know how to best train mentees on the specifics of their assigned duties, including necessary equipment and work procedures. If the workplace mentoring program is managed by an external organization, then they should be sure that mentees have a foundational knowledge of the essential skills that will be

required of them in the workplace and awareness of the potential safety hazards associated with their line of work. Thus, **Recommendation 26** notes that mentoring programs either train mentees or ensure mentees are trained on workplace safety issues and the proper use of equipment at the worksite, before mentees enter the workplace. That way, companies can be assured that their new mentees have a minimum baseline level of knowledge of the work they will be doing, and are prepared to avoid or prevent safety or health risks that may be relevant to a specific workplace.

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION:

DISABILITY:IN UINTA COUNTY'S SEE*DO*APPLY WORKSHOP

In addition to providing employment mentoring to youth with disabilities, Disability:IN also offers all the young people they serve with an advanced workshop designed to improve their ability to join the workforce and engage with local employers. The workshop provides youth with disabilities the opportunity to interact with employers, practice interview skills, learn about and build soft skills, and understand the importance of networking with employers. The program has found this to be a valuable opportunity for connecting youth with disabilities to employment opportunities. Youth with disabilities can often feel intimidated when thinking about entering the world of work, and this workshop addresses those barriers by:

- Engaging youth in a team-building activity that helps them understand how they can fit into a team-oriented workplace environment.
- Conducting mock interviews with more than eight employers so that youth get multiple exposures to different interview styles and how they can respond effectively to questions they are asked.
- Having lunch with the employers to facilitate getting to know each other and further information sharing.
- Going on site visits to businesses so they can see the work environment and get a better understanding of the potential careers in Uinta County, the education needed for specific positions, what employers look for in employees, and the value of networking when starting a search for a job or career.

This workshop empowers youth with disabilities and sets the stage for the deeper mentoring experiences that the program offers. It expands their connections to employers and the community, while also providing staff a chance to teach skills and offer their advice on how to enter the world of work.



MENTEE TRAINING

Mentee training, either pre- or post-match, has been recommended as an enhanced practice in the general mentoring literature, but this practice, in isolation from other practices, has not yet been empirically evaluated. Consistent with this enhancement and specific to workplace programs, **Recommendation 21** suggests that programs should clearly define the purpose and goals of their mentoring program to mentees, particularly related to mentee employment and career advancement. **Recommendation 22** states that programs should train mentees on how to build an identity in their new role as a worker, in general, as well as in a particular career or profession. These recommendations have been found in some existing programs, such as Urban Alliance, which conducts about a month of mentee training with each session lasting about 1.5 hours daily, to prepare youth for entering the workplace on issues such workplace etiquette and culture, as well as such general job skills such as interviewing and specific job skills such as using office equipment and software.¹⁴ YouthBuild also puts considerable effort into their pre-worksite preparation for youth.¹⁵ Others such as Youth Villages¹⁶ also provide youth with training on post-high school education and employment opportunities, financial literacy, and some life skills.

For more insights into this form of complimentary training for youth as they enter the worksite, please see the box below about the work of Disability:IN.

THE ROLE OF PARENTS/GUARDIANS IN WORKPLACE MENTORING PROGRAMS

Several of the workplace programs reviewed for this supplement seem to be designed for late adolescents or young adults, many of whom are

over the age of 18. In this age range, programs are not required to obtain parent permission for their child's participation in the program nor are parents typically involved in program activities. Thus, Benchmarks regarding requiring training mentors on how to develop a positive working relationship with their mentee's parents/guardians may not be relevant or warranted. Nonetheless, **Recommendation 13** suggests that if the mentoring program does involve parents, then mentors should receive training on relationship development with parents/guardians that is focused on supporting their child's professional development. Parental involvement may be particularly important for mentees with a disability.^{17, 18} Mentors can be trained to communicate with parents/guardians about ways that parents can help their children advance in their children's education or careers. For example, many adolescents and young adults won't be able to participating in a mentoring program without help with transportation. Mentors might communicate with parents about the importance of providing a ride for their child to the program as well as the benefits of their deeper engagement in the program. Mentors can also receive training on how to communicate effectively with parents/guardians about the performance of mentees or the next steps that will be taken to help support the mentee's career growth and development. Finally, mentors can be trained about the value of inviting parents/guardians and other supportive family or community members to any closure ceremonies or parties.

DIVERSITY TRAINING FOR MENTORS

Given that most youth mentoring programs primarily serve higher-risk youth, it is imperative that mentors are trained in how to support youth from a wide range of backgrounds.

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Recommendation 10 applies the general mentor training requirement to the topic of training mentors on how they can provide support to diverse populations of youth, recognizing their own cultural biases, and how to teach their mentees about workplace culture, behavior, and professionalism. Similarly, **Recommendation 19** takes this idea a step further, and suggests that mentoring programs train mentors in how the mentor's and mentee's cultural identity, background, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, religion, socioeconomic status, disability status, or other demographic characteristics may affect the mentoring relationship and the mentee's experience in the workplace. This is particularly important in the case of programs accommodating youth with disabilities. Mentors, and ideally their coworkers, need to be trained on any disability issues the youth may bring and how to both be respectful and provide reasonable accommodations around that disability, as part of their mentoring and teaching roles. This orientation will not only ensure that the young person has the support they deserve and that no inadvertent harm is done, but that the company also gets a chance to see how well they accommodate workers with certain disability challenges. Furthermore, **Recommendation 20** suggests that mentors need training in how to support their mentees when they face challenges in the workplace related to these issues of diversity.

Diversity training for mentors should begin with helping mentors to identify their own biases about background or demographic characteristics of either mentees in the program or their mentee, in particular. As part of this training, mentors should also examine the dynamics of their power and potentially, their privilege. Implicit biases have the potential to invite prejudice into the mentoring

relationship, and threaten its success and the success of the mentee. Mentors must also recognize the privilege that has been afforded to them not just in their position of power in the workplace, but also their potential positions of power with regards to their racial identity, gender identity, and sexual orientation, for example.

Without diversity training, a mentor's privilege may blind them to the realities that confront their mentee. It is possible that mentors will be matched with a mentee who has never stepped foot in a professional setting before. Some work environments and norms may be foreign to mentees who may not have had adults in their lives who had the privilege of pursuing a career. Thus, mentees may require time and resources to simply adjust to the workplace setting. Programs should ensure that mentors have the tools to work with mentees to adjust to this new social and performance context, and to help them thrive. This training should also include helping mentors to understand the barriers their mentees may face in building professional networks and seeking help from important referents in the workplace. Evidence suggests that youth from marginalized populations may face cultural barriers to help-seeking activities; mentors can serve as a role model, coach, and connector to reduce their mentees' reluctance to seek help and contribute to building their mentee's networks, and by so doing, advance their mentees' career goals and interests.¹⁹ Programs should communicate this gap in social capital and bias against help-seeking to mentors, and communicate the importance of addressing this disparity over the course of the program by working closely with their mentees to assist them in making connections in the workplace, industry, or field of interest.

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Mentees may be from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds than mentors and coworkers, and it is important for mentors to understand how these differences might impact mentees' experiences in the workplace. Mentees from historically marginalized groups may experience discrimination during the course of the program. Programs should train mentors to build understanding about the potential negative effects of stereotype threats in the workplace, and how these threats may undermine mentees' ability to grow over the course of the program.²⁰

In addition, mentors should be trained on how to detect and address microaggressions, subtle assaults, insults, or invalidations acts that may be experienced by mentees in the workplace.²¹ Because these microaggressions are brief and everyday forms of aggression, they are not always easy to detect. Nonetheless, they can result in perceptions of discrimination, and this discriminatory treatment can have an immediate effect on the mood, self-esteem, and sense of acceptance and belonging of mentees as well as more long-term, debilitating effects on social isolation, mental and physical health, and workplace performance and persistence.^{22, 23, 24, 25}

Mentor training can help raise awareness of potential barriers to success, such as microaggressions, for mentees, and how to address these barriers both with their mentees and coworkers. Training that includes issues surrounding race and discrimination can have the added benefit of teaching mentors to deal effectively with their own unconscious biases, and can help build their empathy for and advocacy skills on behalf of their mentees.^{26, 27}

In addition to understanding the many barriers

mentees from marginalized populations face in the workplace, mentors should also understand how to help their mentees address these issues in the workplace should they arise. However, the most important thing to include in mentor training is to learn to avoid compounding any trauma experienced by their mentees, by intervening on their behalf. Placing the full burden of action on the mentee may cause the mentee to relive the episode which can be upsetting and debilitating.

Programs should train mentors to understand that discrimination in the workplace is typically a systemic issue and, if so, then it will require organizational solutions. Thus, mentor training would ideally build upon training that the company offers to all employees. If this type of training isn't offered, then this can serve as an opportunity to improve training regarding discrimination and bias for the whole company. Programs may want to engage other stakeholders at the organization in a conversation surrounding this issue, so that there may be a communication channel to leadership at the company should action need to be taken. Protecting marginalized mentees should be a major priority of workplace mentoring programs, and related policies and procedures regarding treatment of mentees must be effectively communicated to both mentors and employees during the training phase.

COWORKERS AND BROADER WORKPLACE TRAINING

In workforce mentoring programs, being situated within a company culture provides a rich context of coworkers and experiences for mentees. Coworkers can play an important collaborative role in the success of the experience and the



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mentoring relationship. This context expands a workforce mentoring program from just a one-to-one partnership to a broader network of people who can provide support to mentees in learning and performing new job-related skills, and clarifying and advancing their career goals and plans. The workplace environment can offer a number of different supporting adults for mentees to rely upon for supporting skills development, emotional support, and career advancement.

Because of the unique structure of the workforce mentoring program, **Recommendation 11** suggests programs train mentors to understand how they can engage their coworkers and the broader company to prepare an environment that is suitable and welcoming for mentees. Mentors can communicate to coworkers and company executives about the specific goals of the program, needs of mentees, and how to create an environment that will promote mentee success. When leadership isn't informed of and engaged in the goals and structure of a workplace mentoring program, they can become a roadblock due to lack of buy-in in the program.²⁸ Mentors can also use this opportunity to engage a broader set of stakeholders and company executives to assist in preventing obstacles to building a successful mentoring relationship and program.

This supplement also introduces a new Enhancement (**E.3.8**) suggesting that workplace mentoring programs not only train mentors in how to communicate about the program with their coworkers, but that the program also provide direct training to coworkers about the program, especially to those coworkers who will be interacting regularly with mentees. Organizational climates that are

supportive of mentees and mentoring relationships are associated with mentor reports of higher relational quality and mentee reports of receiving more mentoring.²⁹ Thus, coworkers should know about mentees participating in the program at their company and the types of support mentees may need over the course of the program. This practice is especially important for mentoring programs with mentees with a disability who may need accommodations, or mentees from high-risk backgrounds who may require more support and attention, such as mentees involved in the juvenile justice or the foster care systems.

While it is important for mentors, coworkers, and the broader company to be aware of the types of support that mentees may need or benefit from, it is even more important for mentees to understand this information as well. Mentors can assist mentees with integrating into the culture of the workplace and building their social capital, but ultimately, mentees will need to learn how to do these things themselves. Networking in the workplace can offer mentees the ability to connect with people in their field or industry of interest who may be able to assist them in locating future career-advancing opportunities.³⁰ Thus, **Recommendation 23** suggests training mentees in locating other sources of support within the company and **Recommendation 24** suggests training mentees in how to identify potentially supportive coworkers. As previously mentioned, the workplace can provide a wide number of different types of support to mentees, from the emotional support provided by a mentor, to the skills training often provided by a job coach, to the career advancement support typically provided by a sponsor, and more.³¹ In other words, the more connections to mentors and other supportive coworkers, the better. These different



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types of support and supporting colleagues can help mentees excel in their duties and assist them with advancing their careers. Programs should also emphasize the importance of building these networks as a lifelong skill that will continue to provide them with sources of advice, support, and connection after the mentee exits the mentoring program.

This section has covered a lot of ground in terms of the training that mentors and youth will need

to maximize their time in the program. While the specific content of training will vary from program to program, the most important aspect of training is that it is tailored to the task at hand and accessible to all participants over time. For a tremendous example of a program that offers mentors a holistic training package that supports their work with youth over time, read below about The Fellowship Initiative.

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: **THE ROBUST TRAINING PLATFORM AND SCHEDULE OF JPMORGAN CHASE'S THE FELLOWSHIP INITIATIVE**

The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) is JPMorgan Chase's signature mentoring program for young men of color and leverages employees from across the company to provide career-focused mentoring to youth from economically distressed communities in four cities: New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Dallas.

Similar to other programs profiled in this resource, the employees of JPMorgan Chase are largely tasked with building academic, employment, and career-planning skills among the young men served by the program rather than directly engaging in embedded tasks like job shadows or integration to JPMorgan Chase work teams. This means that most of the activities of the program are not directly related to job-specific content that these employees would already know. As a result, they need high-quality training to do their best work in all of the topic areas where the program asks them to support youth.

To meet this need, TFI has partnered with MENTOR to manage much of the training that mentors receive, pre-match and beyond. The initial orientation for the program is handled in-person by TFI staff leads who work closely with content experts at MENTOR to give a broad overview of the mentor's role, the support they will receive from the program, and how they can forge meaningful, authentic relationships with the young men they are matched with. In addition to this in-person training, an online version is offered to mentors who join the program late in the cycle or need a refresher on the program basics.

The program then offers what is the most robust ongoing training package we encountered when putting this resource together. The mentors receive a live webinar every month that aligns with the core programming with youth in TFI. These webinars are led by MENTOR staff and feature reviews of their upcoming topical activities, suggestions for online resources that can help the mentors go deeper in their work, and opportunities to ask and answer questions as well as celebrate mentoring relationship achievements and milestones.



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Mentors support youth throughout their sophomore, junior, and senior years of high school on topics including résumé writing, interview preparation, leadership development, college planning, international travel, growth mindset, and service learning, as well as racial equity, masculinity, and building a sense of purpose. After these webinars, mentors are equipped to do meaningful work with youth during their three Saturday sessions each month and beyond.

A newer aspect of this training package is the platform that makes all these sessions accessible 24/7 for TFI mentors. All webinars are recorded and then housed, along with other helpful resources like tip sheets and checklists, in an online mentoring portal managed by MENTOR. This ensures that all mentors have access to every training, whenever they need it. It also offers a way for new mentors to get caught up and for all mentors to access tools and supportive content as their mentees bring up challenges and unique needs. The whole series of trainings is searchable and accessible year-round for all mentors.

The program is also exploring technology solutions to support its college fellows (graduates of the high school program), which will support matches once the mentee graduates and goes off to college.

This training approach has allowed TFI to scale up to multiple cities in a short time and to ensure consistency of training content and delivery across multiple sites. The employment of a learning management system is also an innovative way of making sure that mentors can get just-in-time training as needed.



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STANDARD 4 - MATCHING & INITIATION

Standard: Match mentors and mentees, and initiate the mentoring relationship using strategies likely to increase the odds that mentoring relationships will endure and be effective.

BENCHMARKS:

B.4.1 Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

❑ **Recommendation 1:** Programs that partner with multiple companies must take into consideration the characteristics of the companies (e.g. types of work opportunities, skills required of mentees, supports available) when matching mentees to a specific company.

❑ **Recommendation 2:** Program must have clearly established criteria for how gender and age will be considered when making matches, based on their program model, target populations, and program goals.

❑ **Recommendation 3:** Specific mentee characteristics that should be taken into consideration when making matches include:

- Career goals and interests
- Existing career-related skills
- Prior work experience
- Schedule and availability

❑ **Recommendation 4:** Specific mentor characteristics that should be taken into consideration when making matches include:

- The mentor's experience and skills to ensure the mentor has the relevant and sufficient experience to support the mentee's interests and goals.
- The positions of mentor and mentee within the organization
- Schedule and availability

❑ **Recommendation 5:** Mentee preferences should be carefully considered during the matching process. Programs should have procedures for soliciting mentee preferences and obtaining mentee feedback on the selected mentor, prior to the initiation of the mentoring relationship.

B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.

No additional recommendations.

B.4.3 Program staff member should be on site and/or present during the initial match meeting of the mentor and mentee, and, when relevant, parent or guardian.

❑ **Recommendation 6:** When relevant, include the mentee's supervisor and other individual's in leadership positions from the company at the first meeting to demonstrate support for the match.

B.4.4 Mentor, mentee, a program staff member, and, when relevant, the mentee's parent or guardian, meet in person to sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements (e.g., frequency, intensity and duration of match



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meetings; roles of each person involved in the mentoring relationship; frequency of contact with program), and risk management policies.

- ❑ **Recommendation 7:** The commitment agreement should include details regarding the procedures for confirming when and where the match meetings will take place, when relevant, and procedures for what to do when one member of the match cannot attend the match meeting.

ENHANCEMENTS:

E.4.1 Program matches mentee with a mentor who is at least three years older than the mentee.

- ❑ **Recommendation 8:** Program should determine if this enhancement is relevant based on the program goals as well as the target population of mentors and mentees served by the program.

E.4.2 Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another, and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

No additional recommendations.

E.4.3 Program provides an opportunity for the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide feedback about the mentor selected by the program, prior to the initiation meeting.

- ❑ **Recommendation 9:** Not relevant for programs serving mentees over age 18 but these programs should consider how to engage parents/guardians in the initiation of the mentoring relationship.

E.4.4 Initial match meeting occurs at the home of the mentee with the program staff member present, if the mentor will be picking up the mentee at the mentee's home for match meetings.

- ❑ **Recommendation 10:** Programs should determine if this enhancement is relevant based on their program model and whether contact outside of the worksite or program setting is allowed.

E.4.5 Program staff member prepares mentor for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentor with background information about prospective mentee; remind mentor of confidentiality; discuss potential opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring proposed mentee).

- ❑ **Recommendation 11:** In preparing mentors for the initial match meeting, program staff should emphasize the importance of meeting the program requirements regarding the frequency and length of match meeting to help the mentor anticipate any potential challenges due to their location, schedule, and availability.

E.4.6 Program staff member prepares mentee and his or her parents or guardians for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentee and parent(s) with background information about selected mentor; discuss any family rules that should be shared with the mentor; discuss what information family members would like to share with the mentor and when).

No additional recommendations.

New E.4.7 WORKPLACE: Program staff informs the supervisors of the mentor and mentee about their participation in the mentoring program, including when they are scheduled to meet, how long the program will last, the expectations of mentors and mentees in the program, sources of support for mentors and mentees, who to contact with questions or concerns about the program, etc.

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New E.4.8 WORKPLACE: Program should have a procedure for onboarding mentees to the workplace, including giving mentees a tour of the workplace, notifying them of procedures for tracking their time or attendance, introducing mentees to other employees, and any other relevant tasks to ensure the mentee has all the information necessary to feel comfortable and work effectively.

New E.4.9 WORKPLACE: For mentoring programs that do not take place at the mentor's workplace, program should have a procedure for onboarding mentors to the program location, including giving mentors an overview of any required procedures for accessing the building, giving a tour of the location, notifying them of procedures for tracking their time or attendance, introducing mentors to other staff at the location, and any other relevant tasks to ensure the mentor has all the information necessary to feel comfortable and work effectively.

JUSTIFICATION

Matching mentors and mentees in workplace mentoring programs requires some additional considerations to those of traditional mentoring programs due to the unique goals, structure, and target populations of these programs. The following recommendations for matching build upon many of the topics discussed in previous standards, including the importance of mentor and mentee backgrounds and availability, mentees' goals and interests, and potential issues associated with the mentor serving as a supervisor to the mentee. There are also some unique topics in regards to matching, including an emphasis on the importance of organizational support for establishing workplace mentoring relationships and onboarding new mentees to the workplace (or orienting mentors to the location of the mentoring program if the program is not housed at their workplace). These topics are reflected in

three new enhancements for workplace programs. The recommendations offered here are based on findings from the research reviewed for this project, as well as input from the Working Group members noted in the Introduction. The following justification provides additional information for programs to consider when developing their matching policies and procedures.

Matching Mentees to a Company

For programs that have the capacity to manage partnerships with multiple companies and organizations, a number of different dimensions should be considered when matching a mentee to a specific company to ensure mentees are matched with an organization that can best support their learning and professional growth (**Recommendation 1**). This includes the types of work opportunities available at the company, and whether they match the mentee's career goals and interests; the skills that will be required of the mentee at the company, and whether the mentee is equipped with these skills and willing to use them; and the type and level of support available to youth and mentors, which is of particular importance to mentees with specific barriers to participation, such as those who have a disability or who are in an underrepresented group in an industry, or who are learning brand new skills.

Programs should also consider logistical factors like transportation, work hours, and time commitment when matching mentees to companies.^{1, 2} The mentee should be able to conveniently access their assigned workplace, and they should be able to meet the company's work requirements without issue. For programs in which the mentor meets with the mentee at a location other than the mentor's workplace, such as the mentee's school, programs should consider the distance and travel time required by mentors when making matches.

Mentee Goals and Interests

In order for a program to maximize benefits for mentees, it is important to tailor a mentee's workplace experience to both their career goals and existing skill set (**Recommendation 3**). Mentees will be more engaged in a workplace that aligns with their career goals and interests.^{3, 4, 5, 6, 7} This is especially true for older mentees who have thought more meaningfully about their career goals and are beginning to prepare for postsecondary education or entry into the workforce. Older mentees may require greater career guidance or need training in specific skills or certification attainment in order to open up career options, and thus may respond better to more skills-based mentorship, while younger mentees may require greater psychosocial support as they get comfortable navigating workplace culture and the jobsite environment.⁸

In addition to career goals and interests, mentees' knowledge, background, and existing skill set may be particularly relevant when making matches

in programs where mentors and mentees will be working together on projects or work products that require specific skills or precision work. Programs should ensure that mentees have the required skills to succeed in the organization and position in which they are placed. An ideal placement might be one that builds on current strengths and skills but offers plenty of room to grow and push their skills and competencies to new levels. Although the program may not be able to provide a placement in a specific industry or jobsite every time, there are things programs can do to make sure that all mentees have a work experience that propels them forward with meaningful skills and connection to work. For one such example, see the snapshot about the matching process Urban Alliance uses.

Once a match has been made with the best-fitting workplace, the mentees must be matched to a specific mentor within that company. A mentee's experience will only be as good as the mentor with whom they are matched. In the case of workplace mentoring programs, what a mentee learns over

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: FOCUSING ON CORE COMPETENCIES AND EQUIVALENT EXPERIENCE ACROSS SITES IN THE URBAN ALLIANCE MODEL

Like several other providers working in this space, Urban Alliance takes a “big picture” view toward matching youth with a job site. While the program tries to match youth with companies in their industry of interest, the reality is that not every student can be perfectly matched to an internship corresponding with their future career goals. However, the program's focus on building the transferable soft skills that will enable students to succeed in any workplace rather than specific hard skills means that a potential mismatch does not result in a student receiving a less fruitful experience. Students can be placed in a wide variety of job sites and still get a mentoring experience that gives them what they will need to thrive. The program works with each employer partner to ensure that the workplace experiences youth receive are roughly equivalent across job sites, even if they are in radically different industries. So, while youth interest is one input into the matching process, it's not the only one.



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Urban Alliance also takes other information into account during the matching process, such as the skills, experience, and personality of each mentor; the variety of work tasks that the employer can offer; and the unique circumstances of the student. A young person who likes to be active, but who is also dealing with challenges in their home life, might be placed with a more experienced mentor at a site that offers more opportunities to get up and move around during the day, even if that company isn't a perfect fit in terms of that student's career goals.

By ensuring that students get equivalent experiences across sites, and by getting to know youth and business partners intimately, the program is well-positioned to match youth with a valuable internship across many dimensions, rather than overemphasizing just the industry. The competencies students will learn are transferable to any work or school setting, placing less emphasis on a specific type of job and allowing for more complete development of the whole student. Programs that may be struggling to find diverse business partners for student internship placement may want to consider a similar competency-based approach to alleviate concerns around having just the right fit for every student.

the course of his or her experience will largely be dictated by the mentor he or she is paired with. It is therefore imperative for programs to match mentees with mentors who have skills, interests, and experiences that align with the mentee's career goals and interests⁹ (**Recommendation 4**). The mentor should be able to help with coaching the mentee in learning new skills and help guide them to new experiences and opportunities that will help them advance their careers. The mentor may also serve as a connector for the mentee within the workplace by introducing the mentee to other potential mentors, supporting a communal approach to the mentoring relationship. In addition to the mentors' skills, interests, and experiences, there are several mentor background characteristics to consider when making matches.

Gender, Age, and Experience in Workplace Matches

Perceived similarity between mentor and mentee, which could include dimensions such as demographics, background, personality, as well as

personal or career interests, has been associated with perceptions of higher mentoring relationship quality^{10, 11} and thus these characteristics should be considered when making matches between mentors and mentees (**Recommendation 2**). There are a substantial number of studies that have found that gender similarities result in more productive mentoring relationships within the context of workplace mentoring programs^{12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18} and thus gender should be carefully considered when matching. Programs should establish policies and procedures regarding if and under what circumstances mentees will be matched with a mentor of a different gender. These policies and procedures should be informed, in part, by the goals of the program. For example, programs that seek to help expose girls to careers in which there has been traditionally lower representation by women, such as engineering-related fields, may establish a policy that mentors must be female. This policy may be particularly important if mentors are expected to speak with mentees about their own experiences in navigating the challenges associated with pursuing

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an education and career in that field as a person who did not have many role models to follow. On the other hand, if the goals of a program are more focused on giving mentees specific skills in a particular field, then matching based on gender may be less relevant.

Mentor age, or the difference in age between mentor and mentee, is likely not a major consideration when making matches in workforce programs (**Recommendations 2 and 8**). For workplace mentoring programs that serve youth, the mentors will be older than the mentees. Programs that serve high school, college, or early career mentees may want to consider the age difference between mentor and mentee when making matches; however, work and job experience are more relevant characteristics to consider.

Mentor as Supervisor

Programs should also consider the positions of the mentee and mentor on the organizational hierarchy when matching (**Recommendation 4**). As described in “Standard 2: Screening,” there are concerns about matching mentees with their immediate supervisors^{19,20} The existence of a direct reporting relationship introduces an additional power dynamic between the mentee and the mentor.²¹ In these arrangements, the mentee may be concerned with meeting the supervisor’s demands, because failing to do so may result in workplace discipline or even termination.²² This can cause stress in the relationship, resulting in a suppressed willingness on the part of the mentee to express his or her emotions.²³ In addition, the literature also raises the concern that this relationship may result in favoritism or other inequities at the expense of other employees in the supervisor’s workgroup.²⁴ To

mitigate these threats to the mentoring relationship and organizational environment, some have suggested that mentors be at least two levels higher in the organization than the mentee, and that the mentor be outside of formal lines of report for the mentee.^{25, 26}

On the other hand, it is important to note that some research suggests that matching mentors and mentees who are closer in rank is preferable because the mentor will be more relatable to the mentee, and the mentor would be able to better model what a successful employee in the mentee’s position looks like.²⁷ A mentor who is just one step removed from the mentee may have more direct insights into the mentee’s role at the organization, and will be able to relate better to the mentee’s lower standing at the organization. Whereas, pairing a mentee with a mentor who is significantly higher in rank may inhibit the mentor from sharing common experiences or useful network connections with the mentee.²⁸ It is thus important for the program to strike a balance when it comes to matching based on organizational rank—select mentors who are neither too close to overseeing the mentee’s work responsibilities, nor too far away from the mentee in rank and responsibility to be able to relate to them. As with previous recommendations, programs should consider their goals and target population when creating a policy regarding whether the mentee can be matched with a direct supervisor.

THE VALUE OF MENTEE INPUT DURING MATCHING

As stated in previous recommendations, programs should work to provide an experience that is tailored to the mentee to optimize the workplace

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mentoring experience. One of the best ways to do this is to incorporate mentee input regarding what the mentee is looking for in a mentor and any preferences for mentor characteristics into the matching process (**Recommendation 5**). A number of studies have found greater match quality, career support, and role modeling when mentees are allowed to give input into whom they are matched with.^{29, 30} A match in which the mentee has input will make the match feel less formal and arranged, and more like an informal, natural relationship in which it will be easier to develop a trusting, personal bond.³¹ In addition to increasing the likelihood of a higher quality match, including mentee input in the matching process will also decrease the likelihood of an unproductive, potentially negative mentoring relationship.³²

Programs can solicit mentee feedback about specific mentors to be paired with in a number of different ways. Some programs will host social events for mentees to meet potential mentors, and allow mentees to provide a list of names they prefer to be matched with, while other organizations will disseminate background and biographic information on mentors to mentees, and allow them to rank their choices according to the mentor they think will be best for them.³³ The programs will then have the final say when it comes to the match, taking into consideration the stated preferences of the mentee.³⁴ Because programs ultimately make the choice for the mentee, it is important for programs to solicit mentee feedback on the final match selection to foster a sense of agency in the match and to avoid putting the mentee in a relationship that he or she might perceive to be counterproductive.

Organizational Support for Mentoring

The initiation of the match is a great opportunity for the program to engage other stakeholders in the mentoring relationship outside of the mentor and mentee, such as the mentee's supervisor, manager, future colleagues, and other leaders at the organization (**Recommendation 6 and new Enhancement 4.7**). Programs should include other stakeholders within the organization to showcase broad-based support for the mentee and his or her work at the organization. Positively received workplace mentoring programs tend to have greater organizational support for the match, and greater manager support is associated with greater mentee goal achievement.³⁵ In addition, matches with greater organizational support tend to have greater commitment on the part of the mentee and mentor.³⁶ This initial meeting can also open up opportunities for the mentee to find other potential sources of support within the organization to meet their goals and needs.^{37, 38}

As stated in previous recommendations, it is important for matches to have broad-based support within the organization, and that begins with the supervisors of both the mentor and mentee. According to one study, highly rated workplace mentoring programs tend to have greater organizational support for the match, and greater manager support is associated with greater mentee goal achievement.³⁹ In addition, the literature shows that matches with greater organizational support tend to have greater commitment on the part of the mentee and mentor.⁴⁰ Matches will be able to receive high-quality support from their respective supervisors if supervisors are engaged at the outset of the mentoring relationship. For mentees, an engaged supervisor could result in an additional



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supportive figure in their workplace experience. In addition, a supervisor who is informed of the match could minimize the potential for disruption of the mentee's day-to-day duties. For the mentor, an engaged supervisor could result in better communication about how the match might alter the mentor's day-to-day work responsibilities.

There are occasions when programs will want to pay more attention to the overall organizational capacity and skill at hosting particular young people in the program, such as when placing youth with disabilities or youth who have limited English proficiencies. For an example of how one program ensures that companies are ready and willing to effectively serve youth based on their specific and unique needs and abilities, see the brief case study of the process Apprentice Learning has used in matching youth to specific companies and mentors.

Committing to the Relationship

Successful mentoring relationships are often built on trust, communication, and consistency. Consistent meetings over the course of the program will help build trust between the mentor and mentee, and solidify the relationship.⁴¹ Regular meetings can be difficult to put into practice in workplace mentoring relationships, however. Both mentors and mentees may have inconsistent work or school schedules; they may have demanding travel schedules that keep them out of the office; or they may have prohibitive workloads from time to time that keep them from tending to the health of the mentoring relationship. It is therefore important for programs to establish from the outset of the relationship rules and procedures regarding match meetings, and what to do when one member of the match cannot attend a scheduled match meeting or activity

(Recommendations 7). Establishing these rules at the initiation stage of the relationship will mitigate potential feelings of disappointment or betrayal of trust when one member is unable to meet.⁴² This will also help set expectations for the development of the match, and allow for a realistic time frame to be set to achieve the mentee's goals.

Once a match has been made, then mentoring program staff can have a focused conversation with the mentor about their specific mentee and discuss any logistical challenges (e.g., location, travel requirements, schedule) to meeting the program requirements **(Recommendation 11)** and reinforce the importance of committing to the relationship. This discussion is recommended as part of the process of preparing mentors for the initial meeting and should emphasize that this can be an ongoing discussion with the mentor. Program staff should communicate that they are always available to help mentors troubleshoot any challenges to meeting with their mentee or renegotiate when, or even where, they meet in order to maintain the relationship.

Engaging Parents or Guardians in Workplace Mentoring

While parents or guardians may not factor into the workplace mentoring relationship as strongly as they would a community-based match, programs should still work to engage them in the initiation process **(Recommendation 9)**. As discussed in previous sections, it is important for mentees to have broad-based support as they begin their workplace experience. The mentee will experience new challenges—personally and professionally—in the workplace and it will be crucial for them to be able to rely on supportive figures outside of the

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: FINDING JUST THE RIGHT MATCH AT APPRENTICE LEARNING

Note: All youth names have been changed.

As a school-day program, Apprentice Learning serves all eighth graders in our partner schools. We work with the full range of learners, including students with significant socioemotional, language, and learning differences. During our six in-school preparation sessions, apprentices identify their strengths and interests and we deepen our knowledge of a young person with input from teachers and those who know students best. These key insights help us match an apprentice and a worksite. Our goal is for every apprentice to have a positive first work experience.

To accomplish this and meet the needs of such a wide range of learners, we rely on our relationships with worksite partners, especially those that return year after year and know the program well. For example, Boing Toy Shop, a partner since 2012, is a small retail business located within walking distance to one of our schools. Marvin, an eighth grader with significant cognitive and communication challenges, was especially interested in working at Boing so we approached the owner about how this might be possible. Together, we arrived at the solution of pairing Marvin with a classmate, Tony, and sending two apprentices to Boing instead of just one. Marvin is accompanied by, and works alongside, his classmate Tony at the worksite, where they are supervised by the regular staff at the store who have been fully briefed on Marvin's strengths and his limitations.

Similarly, when students have limited English proficiency, we would likely send them to a worksite that typically hosts a small group of four to five students. Our preparatory materials remind mentors to speak slowly and use eye contact when working with bilingual students. A recent example of this matching happened this spring.

We have a worksite partner who is part of Boston innovation economy and has accepted two apprentices who will immerse themselves in the experience. The apprenticeship site is filled with fabulous technology: robots, 3D printers, soldering tools, etc. Apprentices might be coached on assembling a paper audio speaker, then asked to write out specific directions that will be used as part of an engineering class offered at a nearby vocational high school. This project would be completed over several sessions.

This spring, our two apprentices have identified special needs. Rather than see this as a deficit, Apprentice Learning has worked closely with their classroom teachers to identify specific "best teaching practices" used in the classroom that we can share with their mentor. Using care not to label apprentices, we ask the mentor to allow extra time for apprentices to absorb information and instructions. This means slowing things down a bit and asking lots of clarifying questions to be sure apprentices understand what is expected. Additionally, when giving instructions, the mentor should make direct eye contact with students. Furthermore, directions will be better received if engaging auditory, visual, and tactile learning modalities.

We have immense confidence in our apprentices' abilities to perform the tasks assigned to them and want to help our mentor make the best use of her time with them. To check progress and make any midcourse adjustments, Apprentice Learning staff do regular site checks (at all of our sites) both to observe apprentices at work and to offer brief opportunities for the mentor to provide feedback or ask questions.



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workplace. Parents or guardians are an ideal source of support and encouragement for mentees as they work through challenges unique to the workplace that they may never have encountered before. In addition, parents or guardians could provide a safe space for mentees to discuss the match in detail in a way they may not be able to in the workplace. Parents or guardians who are informed of the goals and structure of the program could be in a strong position to provide informed emotional support to the mentees as they shares what is going well in the match, what isn't going well, and other details that may not be appropriate to discuss in the workplace setting.

To ensure that parents or guardians are informed of and engaged with the program, the program could consider having the mentee's parents or guardians sign an agreement that outlines its goals and objectives. This practice will help orient the parents or guardians to what will be expected of their mentee, and what the mentee will expect to get out of the program. In addition, the agreement document could outline the role of the parent or guardian in supporting the mentee's ability to meet the program requirements, such as helping the mentee identify various transportation options to the workplace. Transportation issues that result in the mentee not being able to get to the workplace or location of the mentoring meetings was mentioned as a significant barrier for mentees in meeting program requirements by members of the Working Group.

Orienting Mentees and Mentors to the Program Setting

For the vast majority of mentees, the workplace mentoring experience will be their first time working in a professional setting. The office environment, along with the organizational structure, may be daunting and even intimidating for the mentee. It is therefore recommended that programs include a procedure at their initiation stage to introduce the mentee to the culture, norms, and expectations of the workplace (E.4.8). This practice could be beneficial to the mentee as a form of social modeling in the workplace. The mentee will have a greater understanding of the expectations for their behavior and work in the workplace if they are shown this firsthand by an employee at the start of the program. By setting expectations of the mentees at the initial stage of the program, the mentees will be better positioned for success at the workplace and with their match.⁴³ This practice could also be an opportunity to introduce the mentees to other employees at the organization who could provide additional support to the mentees as they progress in the program.

For one brief example on the importance of getting youth prepared for their experience right before the match, see the following snapshot about the work of Year Up.

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: CREATING EXPECTATIONS AND ACCOUNTABILITY WITH YOUTH IN YEAR UP

To ensure student success and partner satisfaction, Year Up operates on a high-expectation, high-support model. Our student contract sets high workplace expectations and is an important tool in shaping behavior, with earned infractions (such as tardiness or submitting late work) causing a reduction in stipend. Student performance is transparent across learning communities, making students accountable to themselves and to their entire support network—their instructors, coaches, mentors, and colleagues. Year Up has honed its soft-skills development to create confident, accountable, professional young adults who exceed corporate expectations. Some of these skills include developing and practicing an elevator pitch, rehearsing “tell me about yourself” speeches, getting comfortable with public speaking, learning proper email etiquette, using professional greetings, and embracing networking opportunities, as well as concepts like team building, conflict management, time management, giving/receiving feedback, etc.

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STANDARD 5 - MONITORING & SUPPORT

Standard: Monitor mentoring relationship milestones and child safety; and support matches by providing ongoing advice, problem-solving, training, and access to resources for the duration of each relationship.

BENCHMARKS:

B.5.1 Program contacts mentors and mentees at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

No additional recommendations.

B.5.2 At each mentor monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentors about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure.

❑ **Recommendation 1:** Program should ask mentors about the quality of his or her mentee's work and workplace behaviors, the mentee's progress towards achieving his or her goals, and how the mentee is responding to feedback about his or her work performance and workplace behaviors.

B.5.3 At each mentee monitoring contact, program should ask mentees about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

❑ **Recommendation 2:** Program should offer mentees an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in the workplace by asking mentees about any interpersonal or performance concerns or questions, and the mentee's progress towards achieving his or her goals.

❑ **Recommendation 3:** Program should provide feedback to mentees about their performance at the workplace obtained from the mentor and other coworkers or supervisors who have worked with the mentee. This feedback could be about their job performance, the mentoring relationship, or the mentees' progress in meeting goals established during the program.

B.5.4 Program follows evidence-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from mentors and mentees about the quality of their mentoring relationships, and uses scientifically-tested relationship assessment tools.

❑ **Recommendation 4:** Program uses scientifically-tested tools to assess mentees' perceptions of career-related support, when relevant to program goals, as well as the emotional or social support experienced from the mentoring program.

B.5.5 Program contacts a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian, or teacher) at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

❑ **Recommendation 5:** Program contacts another employee (or liaison at the workplace who is familiar with the match) twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

B.5.6 At each monitoring contact with a responsible adult in the mentee's life, program asks about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

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❑ **Recommendation 6:** At each monitoring contact with the employee or liaison at the workplace who is familiar with the mentee, program staff asks about the quality of the mentee's work and workplace behaviors, as well as the mentee's progress towards achieving his or her goals, and how the mentee is responding to feedback.

B.5.7 Program regularly assesses all matches to determine if they should be closed or encouraged to continue.

No additional recommendations.

B.5.8 Program documents information about each mentor-mentee meeting including, at a minimum, the date, length, and description of activity completed.

❑ **Recommendation 7:** Program documents mentee's participation in the program and the workplace, including activities, tasks completed during the mentoring sessions.

B.5.9 Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

❑ **Recommendation 8:** Program provides mentors with resources to help his or her mentee integrate into the workplace, to foster their mentee's feelings of belonging, inclusion, and identity as an employee.

B.5.10 Program provides mentees and parents or guardians with access or referrals to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, web-based resources, available social service referrals) to help families address needs and challenges as they arise.

❑ **Recommendation 9:** Program provides access to resources and referrals (e.g. job training, job placement) to meet the needs and challenges of mentees that are beyond the scope of the workplace mentoring program

B.5.11 Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.

❑ **Recommendation 10:** Program provides additional training for mentors on managing match closure, particularly if the mentor and mentee will continue to work at the same organization at the end of their mentoring relationship.

B.5.12 Program provides mentors with feedback on a regular basis regarding their mentees' outcomes and the impact of mentoring on their mentees to continuously improve mentee outcomes and encourage mentor retention.

No additional recommendations.

ENHANCEMENTS:

E.5.1 Program conducts a minimum of one in-person monitoring and support meeting per year with mentor, mentee, and when relevant, parent or guardian.

❑ **Recommendation 11:** Program should also include the workplace liaison or supervisor at the in-person monitoring and support meeting.

E.5.2 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and/or offers information about activities that matches might wish to participate in together.

No additional recommendations.

E.5.3 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and mentees' families.

No additional recommendations.

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E.5.4 Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the mentoring relationship, prior to match closure.

❑ **Recommendation 12:** Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at the workplace at some point during each year of the mentoring relationship, prior to match closure.

E.5.5 At least once each school or calendar year of the mentoring relationship, program thanks the family or a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., guardian or teacher) and recognizes their contributions in supporting the mentee's engagement in mentoring.

No additional recommendations.

New E.5.6 WORKPLACE: Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match training for mentees on how to realize their career or educational goals and how to respond to feedback in the workplace.

JUSTIFICATION

The overarching goals of monitoring and support practices are to ensure that mentors and mentees are meeting the expectations of the program, to protect mentee safety, and support matches in achieving their goals. There are important benefits of monitoring for workplace mentoring programs including the opportunity to check-in on the mentoring relationship quality, soliciting feedback from program participants, and promoting accountability on the part of both mentors and mentees.¹ However, there is little research to guide recommendations for specific monitoring and support practices for workplace mentoring programs. Thus, this set of recommendations is

based on feedback from mentoring programs, especially those in the project's Working Group, and builds upon recommended practices from previous Standards. There are several themes throughout these workplace-specific recommendations, including an emphasis on checking in with mentors and mentees about not only their relationship, but also about how things are going in the workplace, providing support resources to further the goals of both the mentoring program and the mentee, and giving feedback to mentees about their work. One new enhancement for workplace mentoring programs has been added that builds upon this theme of providing specific resources to support mentees in realizing their goals and strengthening their skills relevant to being a professional in the workplace.

Monitoring Contacts

The benchmarks of the *Elements of Effective Practice* for Mentoring provide guidance regarding the frequency, method, and content of monitoring and the recommendations included in this supplement for workplace programs provide additional direction concerning the content and methods of monitoring matches. Workplace mentoring programs may conduct monitoring contacts with mentors and mentees in-person, at the workplace, over the phone, or via email. In addition to the standard list of topics to discuss during these monitoring contacts, there are several unique topics for workplace programs that program staff should ask about.

Mentors in workplace programs often spend a lot of their time with mentees in situations where they have the opportunity to observe in real-time their mentee's skills, progress toward goals, and

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workplace behaviors. Given this unique opportunity, program staff should ask mentors about the quality of the mentee's work such as the mentee's acquisition of specific skills and the mentee's progress toward achieving their personal workplace and career goals **(Recommendation 1)**. In addition, many workplace mentoring programs aim to help mentees learn how to act professionally and collaborate with others in a team setting, and thus mentors should be asked how well their mentee is doing in terms of interacting with colleagues, and being open to receiving feedback from the mentor as well as their supervisor and colleagues. This information will provide the mentoring program staff insight into the mentee's success in meeting the goals and outcomes of the program and can provide information for future ongoing support for mentees. This information can even be directly shared with mentees to provide them with feedback about their work and the status of their mentoring relationship or can be used to initiate a conversation with mentees about their progress in achieving their goals **(Recommendation 3)**.

At each monitoring contact, mentees should be asked specifically about the career-focused and psychosocial support they have received from their mentor or through their experiences with the mentoring program and workplace, as these are the two core functions of workplace mentoring identified in the research^{2,3} **(Recommendations 2 and 4)**. These two distinct functions have differential impacts on the benefits derived by workplace mentees. Career-focused mentoring is more strongly associated with career-related outcomes (e.g., compensation and promotion) compared to more psychosocial support-focused mentoring.⁴ Conversely, psychosocial support mentoring,

which includes role modeling, acceptance, and confirmation, and greater emphasis on an emotional bond between the mentor and mentee, is more strongly associated with mentees feeling satisfied with their mentor, greater intentions to stay with the company compared to career-focused mentoring,⁵ and a greater sense of affiliation with the workplace organization.^{6,7} Both types of mentoring are associated with job and career satisfaction.⁸ Thus, mentoring program staff should ask mentees about both types of support to get a more complete picture of the mentee's experience.

The final recommended point of contact for monitoring matches is another employee or liaison at the workplace who is familiar with the mentor and mentee and can provide feedback regarding the mentee's work, workplace behaviors, and progress toward achieving their goals, among other topics **(Recommendation 5)**. Obtaining feedback from another person at the workplace who is familiar with the mentee and mentor provides another perspective on the match and can help guide ongoing support. Their feedback can also serve to bolster the company's buy-in for the mentoring program and mentoring relationship. Maintaining communication with and soliciting feedback from someone at the company continues to reinforce their role as a partner in the mentoring relationship and provides an opportunity for the company to provide additional ongoing support for both mentors and mentees, based on the resources they have to offer.

It should be noted that not all the topics recommended above must be assessed during every monitoring contact, but they should be assessed regularly and in a systematic way. In addition to using standardized, scientifically

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tested questionnaires to assess the quality of the mentoring relationship, workplace mentoring programs should include standardized, scientifically tested questionnaires to assess mentee's perceptions of career-related support as well as the emotional and social support as described above.

Below we offer three unique examples of how programs working in this space go about providing

feedback to mentees over the course of their experience. Each of these snapshots features processes that make it easy for mentors to share feedback about the mentee with program staff, shared responsibilities in conveying that feedback to youth, and steps for how to apply that feedback in future work placements or job settings.

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: **USING AN OBSERVATIONAL TOOL AND A MULTISTEP FEEDBACK PROCESS IN THE SPARK PROGRAM**

Workplace mentoring programs must support a young person in learning how to participate in the workplace, including receiving feedback on progress toward goals. Spark offers a multipronged approach to tracking student progress and giving feedback throughout the relationship.

Spark starts with a broad and simple check-in form where mentors and students provide information about their progress and any areas where they need support, which program staff use to prioritize targeted support.

Next, Spark staff visit each site and complete a structured interview with each student and mentor pair. These interviews both support quality assurance and provide opportunity for feedback to the mentor and student. The interviews often allow for working out challenges the pair was unsure how to address, as well as clarifying the student's progress toward goals and areas for improvement. The presence of Spark staff in facilitating the feedback session makes it feel less personal to the student and allows for different perspectives to be discussed. These site visits are also essential in making sure student projects move forward as intended and any logistical issues can be addressed.

This process ensures input from mentors on student performance and shapes the experience, while allowing for multiple voices to provide feedback collectively. All programs working in this space are encouraged to approach providing feedback as thoughtfully as Spark has demonstrated here.



WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION:

GIVING FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE NEXT YEAR'S PARTICIPATION IN THE DISABILITY:IN SUMMER EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

The Summer Employment program provides work experiences for youth with disabilities to evaluate their skills and abilities and provide career exploration opportunities. Youth are eligible for the program when they transition to ninth grade. We match them with a local employer that does work that is of interest to the youth, building on skills and knowledge they possess when possible, and that offers opportunities for young people to really roll up their sleeves and do work—to apply skills, use equipment, be part of a team, and truly get a sense of what being a worker is like. If youth enter the program without much of an idea about the type of work they would like to do, we match them based on interests, and their skills and abilities are further identified through feedback from employers and personal visits from program staff to the worksite.

At the end of the summer, employers offer feedback on the youth's job performance, areas for growth, and on their application of soft skills in the work environment. This employer feedback is discussed with the youth and goals are set to improve their upcoming summer employment position. Many youth go back to the same placement over several years, reflecting and learning new skills each time. But even those youth who go to different work environments year to year always learn about their skills and how they participate in a work environment that is helpful to them moving forward. This feedback process really helps the Summer Employment program prepare youth to transition into the world of work, be informed about potential career choices and fields, and identifies further learning they may need as they explore secondary education.

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION:

A FORMALIZED FEEDBACK AND MENTEE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT PROCESS WITH URBAN ALLIANCE

One of the most valuable aspects of the mentoring experience for Urban Alliance students is the ongoing feedback they receive about their job performance. This feedback is essential to developing their workplace competencies and improving as workers and colleagues. The program doesn't just leave that feedback to chance, hoping that mentors say the right things in the right ways to elicit positive change in their mentees. Instead, Urban Alliance has formalized the feedback process through the development and application of a performance assessment tool.

At several points during the mentoring placement, mentors complete the online assessment and rate how their student is performing in a number of observable areas—punctuality, communication, following instructions, etc.—as well as offering general feedback on their performance and behavior. These



behaviors can be indexed to various social and emotional competencies that may be more difficult to assess, but are critical to both academic and career outcomes. This tool also highlights the actual work the youth has been doing, areas for improvement, challenges the youth is facing at work or in their personal life, and any issues between the mentor and youth. During program coordinator (PC) visits to each job site, PCs sit down with the mentor to review the student's progress and collaboratively troubleshoot any challenges.

While the PC takes on the primary role in conveying that feedback to the student, mentors are also encouraged to offer their feedback, both during these formal check-ins and on a daily basis at work. This structure keeps the mentor from having to engage in conversations they may be uncomfortable with or unprepared to have, while also letting the student know that a team of supportive adults is working together to support their journey. Best of all, when the feedback is positive, this formal check-in process offers an excellent opportunity for students to build their self-esteem and feelings of competency at work. It lets them know that they can find success in professional environments and can motivate them to achieve even more.

Offering General Support

Support for workplace mentoring relationships can be demonstrated through the provision of resources to help guide the relationship, check-ins from program staff, referrals for mentees, and ongoing training for mentors.⁹ There are several unique ways that workplace mentoring programs can provide ongoing support to mentors and mentees that programs should consider.

When developing resources to support mentors, workplace mentoring programs should provide mentors with resources that help to foster mentees' feelings of belonging, inclusion, and identity as an employee at the company (**Recommendation 8**). One meta-analytic study reported that when mentees have positive feelings about the quality of their mentoring relationship, they also report positive feelings about the workplace, in general, and their coworkers.¹⁰ This relationship was strongest for mentoring relationships that provided primarily psychosocial support.

These feelings of affiliation can benefit both mentees and the workplace. For example, mentees who have a sense of affiliation or attachment to the workplace may be more loyal,¹¹ which is particularly beneficial for workplace mentoring programs for new employees or programs that hope to retain mentees even after the mentoring relationship has ended. For mentoring programs that focus on career exploration or work-based learning, when mentees feel a sense of belonging and inclusion at the workplace, they may have greater confidence in their skills and be more likely to want to pursue a career in that field.

Supporting Mentors in Preparing for Closure

One unique ongoing training topic recommended for workplace mentoring programs is training for mentors on managing match closure, which can be more complicated if the mentor and mentee will continue to interact at the workplace or in other professional settings following the formal closure of



the mentoring relationship (**Recommendation 10**). The circumstances surrounding the closure of the match are also important factors to consider when developing ongoing training on this topic (e.g., how to handle things when the mentee is removed from the worksite or program because of performance issues). Ongoing training about closure should address the mentoring program's policies and procedures regarding mentor and mentee contact following closure, which may vary depending on the reasons the relationship ended and the mentor's ability to offer ongoing career guidance and serve as a reference in the future. Ideally this training will take place well before closure and include scenarios to help mentors think through how to handle the variety of closure scenarios, to help protect everyone involved, and help both mentors and mentees derive the most benefit from the mentoring relationship over time, even after it has formally ended.

Giving Mentees Skills to Achieve Their Goals and Benefit from Their Relationship

Another unique recommendation for workplace mentoring programs is the provision of ongoing training for mentees on topics thought to further the goals of most workplace mentoring programs and give mentees skills that will help them strengthen their relationships and achieve their own career goals (**E.5.6**). Many employers report that younger employees lack the communication and interpersonal skills needed to be successful in the workplace^{12,13} and these programs offer a valuable opportunity to build and refine these skills in young people. Mentees may not have had the experience of receiving feedback about their performance in the context of a professional setting and it is likely they will have this experience with their mentor.

Training for mentees regarding how to solicit, respond to, and follow-up with feedback in the workplace will enhance their mentoring experience and provide them with lifelong skills.

As described in “Standard 4: Matching and Initiation,” organizational support for the mentoring relationship is associated with greater mentee goal achievement¹⁴ and greater mentor and mentee commitment.¹⁵ There are two recommended practices to help organizations demonstrate their support for the mentoring program and individual mentoring relationships. The first is the presence of a company liaison or supervisor at the recommended annual in-person monitoring and support meeting (**Recommendation 11**). The role of this person at the meeting should be clearly articulated before the meeting and both the mentor and mentee should be informed that this person will attend the meeting. This practice allows the mentoring program to provide valuable information to the company about the mentoring relationship, creates an opportunity for the organization to provide additional support to both the mentee and the mentoring relationship based on their unique needs and goals, and can increase buy-in from the company for the mentoring program by ensuring that mentors are happy with the experience and that the program as a whole is meeting whatever goals the company itself may have. The second recommended practice is a formal mentor recognition event or announcement at the workplace thanking mentors for their participation in the program (**Recommendation 12**). This is in addition to recognizing mentors individually and serves to underscore the company's support for the mentoring program and provide mentors with public recognition among their colleagues.

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STANDARD 6 - CLOSURE

Standard: Facilitate bringing the match to closure in a way that affirms the contributions of the mentor and mentee, and offers them the opportunity to prepare for the closure and assess the experience.

BENCHMARKS:

B.6.1 Program has a procedure to manage anticipated closures when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

❑ **Recommendation 1:** Program should notify employees within the company that the match is ending in order to reduce possible disruptions to the company's day-to-day operations. If relevant, the program should also advise the company's HR department and the mentee's supervisor when the match will be ending.

B.6.2 Program has a procedure to manage unanticipated closures when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

No additional recommendations.

B.6.3 Program has a procedure to manage closure when one member of the match is unable or unwilling to engage in the closure process.

No additional recommendations

B.6.4 Program conducts exit interview with mentors and mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians.

No additional recommendations.

B.6.5 Program has a written policy and procedure, when relevant, for managing rematching.

No additional recommendations.

B.6.6 Program documents that closure procedures were followed.

No additional recommendations.

B.6.7 Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentors' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for mentor notifying the mentee and his or her parents, if relevant, far enough in advance of the anticipated closure meeting to provide sufficient time to adequately prepare the mentee for closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant

❑ **Recommendation 2:** Program should request that mentors keep details about their mentoring relationship and their mentees confidential, especially if their mentees continue to work at the company or in the same industry or field, when the mentoring program ends.

B.6.8 Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians that includes the following topics of conversation:

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- a. Discussion of mentees' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for notification of mentor, if relevant, about the timing of closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant

❑ **Recommendation 3:** Program should help mentees develop short- and long-term plans for their educational and vocational futures.

❑ **Recommendation 4:** Program should discuss new skills mentees acquired in the program and in their mentoring relationships, and whether their career goals have changed.

❑ **Recommendation 5:** If a company with a workplace mentoring program has a history of hiring mentees as employees, then, prior to match closure, someone from the company or a staff member from the mentoring program should discuss with each mentee whether they will be offered a job or how to pursue job opportunities at the company.

B.6.9 Program has a written public statement to parents or guardians, if relevant, as well as to mentors and mentees that outline the terms of match closure and the policies for mentor/mentee contact after a match ends (e.g., including contacts using digital or social media).

No additional recommendations.

ENHANCEMENTS:

E.6.1 At the conclusion of the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship, program explores the opportunity with parents or guardians, when relevant, as well as with mentors and mentees in order to continue the match for an additional period of time.

❑ **Recommendation 6:** Based upon the age of the mentees, parent permission, program goals, and company rules, mentoring relationships with the same mentor or at the same company may be permitted or even encouraged to continue after the program concludes. Program should provide training to mentors and mentees about what types of ongoing contact are appropriate, given the program's policies.

E.6.2 Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees, when relevant, to mark progress and transition or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship.

❑ **Recommendation 7:** The final celebration should acknowledge the growth of mentees over the course of the mentoring program and should serve to strengthen mentees' confidence in their ability to achieve their career goals.

❑ **Recommendation 8:** The final celebration should bring together multiple stakeholders in the relationship including mentees, mentors, and other co-workers to demonstrate support for mentees and the work they have accomplished over the course of the mentoring program. These events should also celebrate the professional growth of the mentors, which can support the storytelling components of mentor recruitment in future program cycles.



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- ❑ **Recommendation 9:** The final celebration involves mid-to-senior level leadership to heighten credibility of the mentoring program, inform them of program impact on mentors and mentees (plus the impact on company culture), and to generally reinforce their further engagement with, and commitment to, mentoring.

E.6.3 Program staff provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.

- ❑ **Recommendation 10:** Program should include training for mentees to help them independently identify and connect with multiple and varied sources of support in the workplace, such as other mentors, coaches, or sponsors.
- ❑ **Recommendation 11:** Program should introduce or encourage the mentor to introduce mentees to colleagues who have experience or expertise related to the mentee's educational or vocational goals, who may become future mentors or advisors to mentees.

JUSTIFICATION

The final contact that mentees often have with their mentors, their worksite, and the mentoring program itself may be at the point of match closure. The closure experience can contribute to continued and positive growth in feelings of self-worth, self-competence, and trust in relationships in workplaces, generally. It can also be an opportunity to learn how to gracefully end formal, but often very close, relationships while reinforcing and utilizing social and emotional skills youth (and perhaps even their mentors) have developed in the program.

Depending upon how the closure experience is managed by the mentoring program, it can potentially also be a destructive experience where mentees, and even mentors, lose confidence in themselves and their interpersonal or career skills. The potential negative effects that can result from mentoring relationships that closes prematurely are well-documented in the literature. Having an incomplete experience with a mentor can have an adverse effect on the mentee's feelings of competence and efficacy in addition to the generally negative outcomes associated with premature relationship closure (e.g., feelings of abandonment, rejection, anxiety, anger, confusion, and sadness).^{1, 2, 3} In workplace mentoring programs, these harmful effects may be compounded by the fact that the relationship exists in the context of a more public workplace setting. For these reasons, this standard carefully addresses the need for policies and procedures to support the implementation of healthy match closures or transitions that occur between mentees and their mentors or employers.

Notify Coworkers about Match Closure

Even though the majority of formal workplace mentoring programs involve a one-to-one mentoring relationship, the fact that these matches frequently occur in the context of a workplace widens the scope of the program beyond just a single adult-to-youth relationship. In essence, in a workplace mentoring program, the mentee is placed in a broader social network with one adult as the primary referent. Because of this complex ecosystem around the match, closure has the potential for wider spread implications across the workplace when the mentee exits the program. Thus, **Recommendation 1** suggests that the program notify the mentor's coworkers when a match is

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nearing its end. For example, work responsibilities and schedules may need to be reshuffled or reassigned following the exit of the mentee from the company. Therefore, it is important for the program to announce the end of the match to the company as a whole, or, at the very least, to all relevant employees who operated within the mentee's sphere. In addition, because of the potential impact of closure on staffing and organizational structure, practitioners also suggest that the mentor and/or mentoring program notify the company's human resources department of the impending match closure. This practice is especially important if the mentee has been offered a job at the company following the end of the match.

Extra Caution Around Maintaining Mentee Confidentiality

Programs should close out matches in a manner that prioritizes mentee confidentiality, particularly with respect to any personal information shared with mentors over the course of the match, as indicated in **Recommendation 2**.

Unique Vulnerability of Mentees in Workplace Mentoring Contexts

Mentees are in a particularly vulnerable position, as the workplace mentoring experience may be the very first step in their careers. The relationships they form and the work they do in this workplace may very well determine future opportunities in their career trajectory. It is, therefore, recommended that the program close the match in a manner that prioritizes mentee confidentiality and preserves the positive relationships the mentee formed over the course of his or her workplace experience. This process could involve consulting with the mentee about what he or she would like to keep private about the match, as well as the work he or she did

while in the program, or deleting or archiving files related to the mentee's experience after a certain amount of time. It is important for programs to keep in mind that many of these mentoring experiences will be the mentee's first experience in a professional work setting, and mistakes should be expected to be made. These mistakes—assuming that they are innocuous and do not suggest harmful patterns—should not follow the mentees as they continue in a career path. The workplace should serve as a safe space for the mentees to grow. That should involve an environment where innocent mistakes are forgiven and a margin for error is granted, and that should be reflected in the work products and responsibilities assigned to the mentees, as well as in the closure process. Confidentiality in closure is especially important should the mentees remain at the company following closure of the match.

Strategies to Maintain Mentee Confidentiality Post-Closure

A workplace mentoring relationship is oftentimes no less personal than a traditional community-based one-to-one mentoring relationship. The participants often develop personal relationships with one another built upon mutual trust—just like in a traditional community-based setting—and personal information may have been shared that participants may not want disclosed to others, particularly to coworkers or supervisors at the company, or to future employers or outside professional contacts. Therefore, there should be a process in place for mentees to close out their mentoring relationships in a manner in which they feel like their standing at the company and the advancement of their careers will not be jeopardized.⁴ This process should be completed regardless of the manner in which the match closes (i.e., anticipated or unanticipated; mutual or not mutual).



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One way this process could be handled is through a confidential meeting facilitated by the Human Resources department or external mentoring program during which time both the mentee and mentor sign a type of nondisclosure agreement that outlines parameters of what can and cannot be discussed about themselves and their relationship. This process could be especially important if both the mentor and mentee remain at the company following termination of the match.

Key Topics for Pre-Closure Discussion

The topics that should be discussed with mentees prior to match closure are described in Benchmark 6.8; however, we recommend that three additional topics be covered during the closure process with workplace mentees in addition to the existing list.

Career Planning

Mentees will learn a lot about their career goals and interests over the course of the mentoring program. It should be the responsibility of the mentor and the company to serve as resources for career guidance for the mentee about actions to take and additional professionals to meet upon completion of the program, whether the mentee remains interested in the industry or field related to their workplace experience or not. **Recommendation 3** suggests that mentors and other coworkers at the company may be able to offer advice to or make connections to other people in their network on behalf of their mentees. They can also be instrumental in helping mentees develop their short- and long-term plans for their educational and vocational futures. These activities should be an integral part of the closure process, perhaps through a sit-down conversation between the mentee, mentor, and relevant supervisors or other employees who have an interest in the youth's future.^{5, 6}

Programs may also ask each mentee to complete a worksheet that encourages them to think about their career goals, and map out a plan to move forward along their desired career path. Because this may be a unique opportunity for mentees to have a safe space to consider their career goals with input and guidance from experts, mentoring programs should be prepared to provide mentees with support in this process. Many mentees do not have the privilege of having access to adults who have firsthand knowledge of the career they hope to enter, building a professional network, or planning a career path. It is therefore vitally important for programs to include such guidance and reflection when nearing completion of the program.

For one such example of post-mentoring planning support, see the snapshot below about the efforts of Year Up to support mentee transition.

Reflection on Experiences in Program

The literature on apprenticeship and youth workplace mentoring shows strong evidence of a deeper level of learning and appreciation of the mentoring experience when mentees are given spaces and mechanisms to reflect on their work.^{7, 8, 9, 10, 11} When programs give mentees the opportunity to reflect deeply on their achievements over the course of the experience, they are able to have greater perspective on the skills they built and how the experience relates to their career development. Thus, **Recommendation 4** suggests that the program staff or mentors, theoretically trained and coached by program staff, should have discussions with mentees about the new skills they acquired during their participation in the program, including technical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal skills.

The closure process is a great time to implement such reflection activities. A conversation between

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: POST-PLACEMENT PLANNING AND SUPPORT IN YEAR UP

We have an entire team dedicated to working with our young adults post-graduation to secure careers in their fields of expertise. Our Employment Placement Managers (EPM) partner with students to connect them with careers up to four months after graduations. EPMs track student job placement, whether jobs are what we consider to be Year Up related (i.e., you were a cyber security skill track student and are currently working in a cyber security career), how many students are directly converted from intern to full-time employee with their internship company, total wages, and post-secondary education. Students are required to create post-graduation plans which include an overview of their “next steps.” All of this information is tracked over time through in-person meetings with graduates, as well as via phone and email, often times leveraging the relationships of instructors, mentors, and coaches in helping graduates move their plans forward.

mentee and mentor, and potentially other supervisors or stakeholders, could have a profound impact on what the mentee is able to take away from the experience. A discussion of the skills they have learned or the work they created could help put the experience into context for mentees, and allow them to think about how they can build on the experience to further their career goals. It could also be an opportunity for mentees to think deeply about whether the experience in this particular work setting is what they want to pursue as a career. In addition, this exercise can also be an opportunity for mentees to learn how to talk about their skills and achievements in a professional setting, which could be useful in the future when they are participating in job interviews, networking experiences, or future employment opportunities. This recommendation could also be realized by having mentees complete a written reflection on their experiences that they can discuss with their mentors, as was done by one program¹²

It is important to give mentees space to reflect on their relationship so that they can understand

what they are learning and how that relates to their development using a guided reflection activity such as a blog post or thoughtful conversation. This closure recommendation is also an opportunity for reflection on the part of the mentor. Prior mentoring research shows that creating space for the mentor to process the development of the mentee is often also helpful for mentee development.¹²

For one example of how reflection and future planning is handled for middle school students just starting to think about careers, see the snapshot about Apprentices Learning below.



WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: **REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE AND PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE IN THE APPRENTICE LEARNING PROGRAM**

In Boston, many schools are K-8, and schools often seek ways to more formally mark a student's transition to high school. Apprenticeship Learning is seen as a critically important way to prepare students for this transition. As such, some schools will include the Apprenticeship program on a student's report card (Pass/Fail). In schools where students prepare a graduation portfolio, an eighth grader's apprenticeship work is reflected in several ways. First, each student completes a typed résumé. This is now stored on students' Google Drive and can be carried through high school. Second, each student writes a thank-you letter to their mentor. We use writing prompts to expedite this process and ask classroom teachers to complete this with students. See below for one very touching example.

Because most students are only 14 at the end of our program, and will not have access to career services until after 10th grade in most high schools, we see this as a great preparation for high school. That said, we are also advocating for earlier services in high school, especially for students who arrive in ninth grade with legitimate summer job experience.

Example of a thank-you letter to a mentor:

First and foremost, I want to start by saying thank you for the opportunity to work with you.

The special part about what you do is putting tools into the computer, putting them away, and having other tools in the basement that people don't need now but will like them for next season. One fact I remember is that you have more than 6,000 tools in the store.

One responsibility I particularly enjoyed and learned from was doing inventory. I wanted to thank Janet for showing me the names of the tools and how to use them. In the future when I have a career and I'm building something, I can have a flashback about my experience at Ace Hardware and use what I learned. This site can really help me in the future by knowing a lot about tools and how to mix cement and use it on the sidewalk. Now I am more comfortable with tools and how to use them for different situations.

This opportunity can really help kids by helping them grow up to get them ready for a job in the future. It helps them by what to expect at an interview and how to ask questions and how to be prepared for an interview. This opportunity will help them write a good résumé.

Thank you for your hospitality and your cooperation in helping me work. This experience will help and motivate other people and even people my age group to try to get a job and to mature.

Your good friend,

Cody



Policies for Hiring Mentees Post-Closure

For companies that have the capacity to hire former mentees, **Recommendation 5** suggests that there should be a discussion during closure about whether mentees will continue at the company when the mentoring program ends. The potential for employment beyond the program should be discussed prior to closure in order to give the mentee space and time to consider his or her future at the company. Furthermore, these discussions are particularly important to provide support to mentees who are not offered paid positions at the conclusion of the program, especially if other mentees will be offered positions.

Relationship Continuation

Because the mentoring programs may be the first professional or career experience for a mentee, it provides a stepping stone to other professional activities. Hence, mentees can build upon the relationship(s) they have established at the workplace and leverage them to find entry into other internship, mentoring, training, or employment experiences. When the program ends, continuing the relationship could be instrumental to the future educational and career success of the mentee. Theoretically, mentors in the program can continue to provide guidance, connections, and support to their mentees throughout their mentee's career within the constraints of the program. Thus, **Recommendation 6** suggests that programs may permit or even encourage mentoring relationships to continue after the program concludes, while providing mentors and mentees with guidance about the types of ongoing contact that are appropriate. Note that we learned from our Working Group members that some workplace mentoring

programs are multiyear programs where mentees can return to the same company or even work with the same mentor for more than one year.

The decision regarding whether the mentoring relationship can continue should be informed by several factors described below.

- First, the age of the mentees is important to consider. For mentees who are under 18 years old or who may have an intellectual disability, or some other characteristic that could impair their making an informed decision or protecting their own safety, receipt of parent permission is critical for allowing ongoing contact between match members. For older mentees who are young adults and over 18 years of age, parent permission is not required and may not be appropriate. For mentees in this age range, there may be a greater need for their matches to continue. Graduation from high school may be nearing and decisions about future plans may be imminent. They may have already ended their formal education and have chosen to enter the workplace; hence, they may need connections to employment opportunities, job references, and ongoing support.
- Second, the goals of the program should also be considered. For programs designed as group mentoring programs, with one mentor matched to a group of mentees at once, continuation may be difficult to implement. The mentor's commitments and availability should be considered when evaluating the potential for match continuation. If the company has a consistent relationship with a mentoring program in which a mentor is matched with multiple mentees per year, then the mentor will need to consider whether he or she will be able to devote enough time and resources to sustain multiple productive matches

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simultaneously. For programs designed to recruit or retain older mentees who have already expressed interest in the field practiced in the workplace, a more enduring relationship with the mentor may be more relevant to help sustain mentees' interests over time and help mentees cope with educational and career challenges, open opportunities, and inform decision-making.

- Third, organizational boundaries that may be in place will need to be considered. Because many workplace mentoring groups are sponsored by private companies, the rules for employees within each workplace may speak to issues regarding ongoing contact with mentees. These policies may permit or prohibit contact with mentees outside of the program structure.

There are a few workplace mentoring programs, including a few members of this project's Working Group, that have reported their specific strategies for encouraging or supporting relationship or program continuation. For example, YouthBuild provides assistance with job placement and retention, and continuation with academic support and case management, referrals to supportive services, and alumni social activities as part of the transition services and program follow-up.¹³ Paid staff members at Urban Alliance offer formal education and career support services to alumni including individual coaching, assistance with job searchers, networking, alumni reunions, and networking for paid internships.¹⁴ Finally, Job Corps offers career transition services to alumni for up to a year after program graduation.¹⁵ All programs working in this space should think about what they can reasonably offer in terms of this kind of ongoing support.

For one example of a program that offers youth exiting a chance to come back into their next program once they have advanced in their postsecondary education, see the snapshot below of General Motor's Student Corps.

FINAL CELEBRATIONS

Enhancement 6.2 suggests that mentoring programs commemorate the end of mentoring relationships with a final celebratory meeting or event. There are three recommendations suggested for workplace mentoring programs related to this enhanced practice.

For some mentees, the workplace mentoring experience may serve as the first and possibly best opportunity for mentees to jumpstart and develop their career goals and interests. Positive reinforcement and encouragement are essential for enhancing mentees' self-esteem and motivation throughout the program, but it is especially important to mark each mentee's completion of the program with a celebration affirming their accomplishments and reinforcing their ability to use the skills they learned in the program to advance their career goals and interests.

In final mentor-mentee meetings, mentors should be encouraged to express confidence in their mentee's ability to continue to make progress toward achieving their goals, as noted in **Recommendation 7**.¹⁶ This celebration could take a number of forms, including a one-on-one celebration between only the mentee and mentor, with a reward or activity of the mentee's choosing; a group celebration with multiple matches in the company, and supervisors and high-level supervisors present; or the final celebration could act as a final presentation of sorts, in which mentees are offered a forum in which to

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: TRANSITIONING STUDENT CORPS ALUMNI INTO FUTURE GM MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES

While Student Corps interns certainly learn valuable skills over the 10 weeks of the program, the relationships they build in that time often last much longer. It is common for youth to stay in touch with the retirees and college students they worked with for report card checkups, college decision help, letters of recommendation, and personal advice. These ongoing intergenerational relationships are a tremendous asset for the young people who move on from the program.

However, their engagement with the program often does not end there. As students graduate high school and attend college, they are encouraged to reapply to GM Student Corps as a college intern. Having just navigated this path into higher education themselves, these alumni are a perfect fit for mentoring the next wave of high school interns and sharing their lessons learned along the way. This new role also offers them a chance to grow their leadership skills and engage in new learning experiences.

As these program alumni matriculate through their college course and narrow their studies down to specific areas of interest or careers, the program also offers them increased exposure to related work at GM and employees in the company who may be helpful to their career interests. GM also offers many other internships and onboarding opportunities and Student Corps alumni are encouraged to come back to the company for these opportunities as well.

showcase their work.^{17, 18, 19} Whatever the setting, it is important for the celebration to give both the mentee and mentor a chance to end the mentoring relationship in a healthy and joyous way.

In this celebration, it is also important for the mentor to feel valued and appreciated. The program may want to award mentors with a token of appreciation or recognition, and to recognize mentors who went above and beyond with their mentee.^{20, 21} Some programs may want to reward mentors outside of the celebration such as mentioning the mentor's work in a company newsletter, providing the mentor with a gift card or tickets to events, making a charitable donation in the employee's name, or giving the mentor fun gifts or "swag."²²

Over the course of the program, mentees may form relationships not only with their mentors but also a

host of other supportive figures in the workplace. As we know from the literature, there are often a number of other supportive individuals available for mentees in the workplace.²³ Thus, to create a meaningful celebration that brings together all of the mentee's network of support, others who were stakeholders in the mentee's development—such as fellow coworkers, supervisors, and executives at the company—should be included in this celebration event, as suggested in **Recommendations 8 and 9**. This broad-based showing of support will serve as additional affirmation to mentees that their contributions to the company are valued and that they have a wide array of people in their corner as they move on to the next steps of their career trajectories.



Building the Social Capital of Mentees

The third general closure enhancement suggests that mentoring programs provide training and support to mentees and mentors about identifying and connecting with natural mentors as they exit the program. There are two specific recommendations for workplace mentoring programs related to this suggested practice.

Teach Mentees How to Build Social Capital

A mentor is just one source of support for mentees in the workplace. Mentees can also find more technical, skills-based support from a variety of other professionals working at the company or in the industry or field the mentee is interested in.²⁴ Finding these sources of support takes social skills and initiative on the part of the mentee, and **Recommendation 10** suggests that workplace mentoring programs train mentees in locating, identifying, initiating, and maintaining these relationships so mentees can continue to receive crucial developmental support in the workplace mentoring program and, in the workplace, more generally, for years to come. This recommendation draws from an emerging literature in the youth mentoring field on youth-initiated mentoring. A number of studies have been conducted on this approach where mentees are trained to initiate mentoring relationships,^{25, 26} and studies of this approach have been shown to be effective in developing help-seeking and networking skills among youth from diverse populations, particularly those from underrepresented groups, while improving the interpersonal skills the youth need to build their social networks.^{27, 28, 29, 30} These skills will serve youth well in any workplace and across time in their chosen career path.

Connect Mentees to Potential Future Mentors or Advisers

Workplace mentoring programs should be focused not only on providing mentees with the resources they need to succeed in their workplaces, but also on setting mentees up for success as they progress along their chosen career paths, as noted in **Recommendation 11**. We recommend that workplace mentoring programs provide mentors, supervisors, and other stakeholders in the mentee's development with opportunities to formally connect mentees with other professionals in their networks who may be able to assist mentees in achieving their career goals. These connections will help mentees expand their professional networks and potentially provide them with future opportunities to advance their careers. These introductions can be conducted either in person or virtually with the idea of growing the mentee's social capital, which is often underdeveloped in the networks of youth in underrepresented groups. For example, using LinkedIn as a professional networking device both within the program and for connecting mentees to other professionals for education or career advice or opportunities could be an effective strategy to help achieve this goal.

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PROGRAM PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION

The following recommendations support the planning, design, and maintenance of high-quality workplace mentoring programs for youth and young adults. Please note that the recommendations provided here for workplace mentoring programs are intended to supplement and clarify the general guidance recommended in the fourth edition of *The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. The sections of this guide, focused on the six core Standards, offer the most direct guidance on day-to-day operations and procedures, while the topics covered in this section focus more on initial program planning, leadership, and evaluation of services.

PLANNING AND PROGRAM DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

Program Mission Statement and Overall Vision

□ Recommendation: If the workplace mentoring program is one that has been developed “in-house” by a business, they may want to develop a mission statement just for the mentoring program and note how it aligns with the larger mission of the business itself. This mission may focus on altruistic aspects of the program (i.e., providing opportunities to young people) or also include benefits to the company that give purpose to the program (i.e., creating a talent pipeline of potential future employees).

Program Theory of Change and a Formal Logic Model

□ Recommendation: As with the mission statement, a workplace mentoring program’s theory of change should articulate the benefits that mentees/protégés derive from the experience, as well as the benefits experienced by employee mentors and how the business as a whole benefits from participating in or running the program. And like all good theories of change, attention should be paid to the conditions external to the program that need to be in place for the theoretical model to work (e.g., collaboration with teachers if the program is drawing students from local classrooms, leadership buy-in from local companies that might supply mentors, a robust local economy that would facilitate placing mentees in jobs at the end of their involvement, etc.).

Workplace mentoring programs may find it especially helpful to articulate the types of support, training, and supervision that mentors are expected to offer mentees and the benefits that mentees will derive from each of those forms of support. Programs are encouraged to include both job/career skill development goals and goals related to the psychosocial support mentors provide. The evaluation content at the end of this section further illustrates the types of outcomes that workplace mentoring programs might target, and a strong theory of change will illustrate exactly how the program produces those outcomes through mentor and staff actions.

Marketing and Communications Plan

❑ **Recommendation:** For programs coordinated by a nonprofit organization, school, or other nonbusiness entity, the marketing plan should contain details of how local businesses and their employees can benefit from participation in the program and how the program will get that message to prospective partners through a variety of outreach methods. Conversely, businesses that operate mentoring programs should have marketing plans that detail key leadership contacts at local schools and youth-serving institutions, and offer details about the benefits that young people can experience in the program and how they can get involved. Regardless of which partner organization develops these plans, they should include strategies for promoting the program with local media to reach parents, families, and employers, as well as highlighting the “win-win” nature of the benefits for youth and businesses.

Even programs that are internally managed by a company as a way of orienting new entry-level workers can have a marketing and communications plan that encourages employees to sign up as mentors, promotes participation to new employees, and details how the program is implemented. These plans should also include strategies for sharing the good work of mentors and mentees with the rest of the company and how the results of the program will be shared with leadership.

Policy and Procedure Manual

❑ **Recommendation:** Workplace mentoring programs often involve many different entities working in partnership (e.g., local businesses, schools, and a coordinating nonprofit), thus it is important to have established policies and procedures for the program overall and for each specific mentoring site. This is especially important if program participants will visit a variety of workplaces and locations through their participation in the program. While the program may have an overall set of policies that guides partnerships with participating organizations in general, each unique workplace or program setting may have policies and procedures that relate to how employees and youth work together in those environments, especially around issues of safety, risk management, employee roles and responsibilities, and compliance with labor laws and site-specific policies.

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP AND OVERSIGHT RECOMMENDATIONS

Adequate and Appropriate Staffing

❑ **Recommendation:** If the program design includes multiple entities that are collaborating on the delivery of a program—such as a nonprofit connecting students from a school with local businesses that can provide internships and mentors—then it is critical that each entity have a clear point of contact. Ideally, this would be a representative of the school/business/organization who has responsibility for conveying roles and responsibilities to participants, supports the scheduling of activities and mentoring times/locations, and is available to troubleshoot problems as they arise. Even in program designs where one organization is in the lead for running the program, it is critical that each participating site or school also provides a liaison to support program implementation. Each participating entity should ensure that their representative has adequate time to fill this role.

And because logistical challenges can arise when bringing large numbers of youth and mentors to a business, school, or other location, we recommend that programs have a master calendar of all events, mentoring meetings, and other activities that will need coordination, including which individuals are responsible for planning and executing the activity. This can be particularly helpful in ensuring that busy employee mentors are clear on when they will be meeting with their mentee so that they can schedule their work tasks accordingly and minimize the number of missed mentoring sessions throughout the year.

Data and Information Management

❑ **Recommendation:** Workplace mentoring programs should ensure that they have data systems that have the ability to track critical information about participants, especially the time spent at jobsites and hours worked by mentees, the hours spent in mentoring activities by mentors, and any details about the mentoring relationship and the youth’s participation at the jobsite that may be required to comply with human resource requirements or labor laws.



Partnerships with Local Programs and Services

□ **Recommendation:** Because the vast majority of workplace mentoring programs inherently involve partnerships between organizations (nonprofits, schools, businesses, trade unions, etc.), it is critical that these programs have written partnerships agreements or Memoranda of Understanding that provide the information about the program and outline the roles and responsibilities of each partner organization.

These agreements should cover key details including:

- Commitments of organization leadership
- Clarification of goals and objectives of the program
- Budgets and financial responsibilities
- Points of contact for each organization
- Details on scheduling and access to facilities
- Roles and responsibilities of mentors/mentees/staff
- Key metrics, such as number of mentors provided by a business or frequency of mentoring activities
- Rules around out-of-program mentor-youth contact
- Data sharing agreements
- The duration of the partnership

PROGRAM EVALUATION RECOMMENDATIONS

Workplace-oriented mentoring programs are encouraged to engage in meaningful evaluation activities throughout their natural lifecycle, starting with more formative and process-focused evaluations in the early years, moving to outcome evaluation when the program is operating at peak capacity and staffing, and examining implementation drivers, adaptations, and innovations when the program reaches full maturity and engages in replication beyond the initial development setting.

The outcomes of workplace mentoring programs are likely to differ based on several criteria, such as the age of youth served, the goals of all participating organizations, and the roles that mentors are specifically asked to fill. Programs may choose to think about outcomes across a framework of career development pathways, such as the one presented below, which categorizes outcomes that may be relevant for programs working at specific points on a student's journey.

PROGRAM PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION

CAREER STAGE	DEFINING ACTIONS OF YOUTH AND MENTOR	OUTCOMES FOR CONSIDERATION
Planning	Exploration of various potential fields/careers, including initial learning and hands-on application of concepts/skills. Emphasis on connecting the world of work to school and personal interests/passions (e.g., “sparks”). Mentors focus on building initial interest and passion for a career or job and support understanding the pathways and steps to career goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career exploration activities/actions • Level of interest in an industry or field • Level of interest in specific careers • Career planning activities/actions • Higher education planning • Identification with career field (imagining future self in role) • Importance of school to work/career
Development	Establishment of career engagement and active learning of job tasks and skills, as well as “soft” skills that facilitate employment. Should involve mastery of entry-level skills and opportunities to develop advanced skills. Often involves embedding mentee in a worksite doing meaningful projects. Mentors focus on teaching skills, role modeling professionalism, and integration into workplace culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive job orientation (generic workplace skills and attitudes) • Acquisition of specific job skills training/certification • Job competence/efficacy (perceived self-efficacy, confidence in doing the job) • Job role identity (identification with specific job) • Ongoing career planning or higher education planning for advancement in career • Positive working relationships with others • Feelings of support in the workplace
Maintenance and Growth	Advancement of career interests and goals, with an emphasis on retention within a job or field or professional growth. Mentors in this stage offer more psychosocial support to mentees and emphasize overcoming professional challenges, providing the mentee with opportunities for advancement and increased responsibility, and supporting advancement up the career ladder.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perceptions of positive career support (psychosocial) • Salary and other compensation (e.g., benefits) • Promotion or other forms of career advancement • Employment stability (retention or duration in a job or industry) • Plans to be retained in a job/career (or plans to change jobs/careers) • Acquisition of advanced skills or certification • Transitioning into mentoring others (shift from learner to teacher)



As noted in the introduction of this resource, we found a dearth of formal, rigorous evaluations of workplace mentoring programs. Most of what we encountered were anecdotal qualitative studies about mentor and mentees' experiences and perceptions of support. But one shining example of formative and true impact evaluation can be found in Urban Alliance, a participant on this project's Working Group whose work has been spotlighted throughout. See the snapshot below for more information about how they have evaluated their work over time.

WORKPLACE MENTORING IN ACTION: **EVALUATING THE URBAN ALLIANCE MODEL OVER TIME**

Not only is Urban Alliance a leader in the development of strong workplace mentoring opportunities, they are also a leader in an area that many programs shy away from: rigorous program evaluation. Urban Alliance has undertaken a variety of evaluation activities over the years, including an implementation evaluation that examined whether the program was functioning on the ground as intended, as well as a rigorous impact evaluation—an independent randomized controlled trial—through their participation in the Social Innovation Fund.

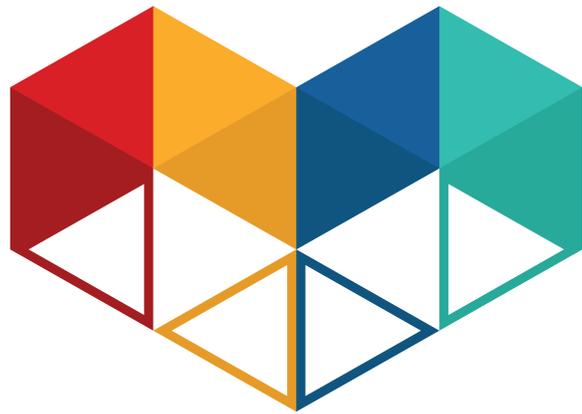
Unfortunately, we did not find many examples of workplace mentoring programs engaging in this type of rigorous evaluation during our literature review. While some programs in academic settings had engaged in experimental design research, this type of high-quality evaluation was almost completely lacking in the youth workplace mentoring literature.

But Urban Alliance has been well-rewarded for engaging in more rigorous forms of evaluation. Key findings from their first randomized controlled trial revealed that for Urban Alliance students, compared to a control group of similar youth, completing the High School Internship Program had a statistically significant impact upon the likelihood of young men attending college (increased by 23 percentage points), the likelihood of mid-GPA students enrolling in four-year colleges (increased by 18 percentage points), and students' retention of and comfort with professional soft skills.

Urban Alliance is now in the middle of conducting a second impact evaluation, once again using a rigorous design. You can read the reports from their initial studies at the links below:

- Process evaluation: <https://theurbanalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RCT-Process-Study.pdf>
- Interim RCT report: <https://theurbanalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/RCT-Interim-Report.pdf>
- Final RCT report: <https://theurbanalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/08292017.pdf>





MENTOR



LGBTQ SUPPLEMENT

TO THE
**ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE
PRACTICE FOR MENTORING**

January 2019



MENTOR
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP



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- MENTOR would like to specially thank Dr. Christian Rummell for his expertise and contributions to this guide and the preceding BBBSA initiative (see next page for more details about this innovative work). To learn more about Christian’s work, visit the Mentorist website at www.mentorist.org.



ABOUT THIS SUPPLEMENT

In 2016, BBBSA began piloting a capacity-building initiative to develop awareness training, support the formation of new partnerships, and intentionally provide services for LGBTQQ youth to its network of more than 270 Affiliates around the United States. Through this innovative initiative, BBBSA sought to address many of the barriers that have traditionally prevented LGBTQQ youth from being served more effectively by youth mentoring programs.

There is a growing recognition in the mentoring field that the failure to provide thoughtful, responsive, and inclusive programming leaves LGBTQQ youth at risk for additional harm each time they receive services from ill-prepared staff and incompatible mentors.

Many of the recommendations in this supplement have been informed by site visits, staff trainings, and extensive procedural changes made at 20 local BBBSA Affiliates across the country. Many direct examples of the changes these sites have made to their policies, procedures, staff development, and communications are provided throughout this supplement.

To build on lessons learned and insights from the national initiative, BBBSA approached MENTOR about co-developing a supplementary resource to the standard *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*[™] on serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively. This supplement is the result of that collaboration, and BBBSA and MENTOR present this final product to the mentoring field, made possible with funding from the Altria Group.



INTRODUCTION

The LGBTQ Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™ responds to a long-standing call to extend the reach and quality of mentoring relationships to one of our nation's most underserved, marginalized, and vulnerable populations—youth who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ).¹ As a well-documented body of research has noted, large numbers of LGBTQQ youth are growing up at a deficit—facing difficult odds due to day-to-day experiences with societal stigma, victimization, bias, and rejection.² Given such a landscape, there is a need for caring adults, advocates, and mentors now more than ever. Unfortunately, only a small number of formal mentoring programs across the country are currently providing mission-driven services that speak directly to the unique needs and safety concerns of this population.³

Importantly, a growing body of research and practitioner-piloted practices also caution that mentoring services for LGBTQQ youth may require additional levels of awareness, program capacity, and advocacy. Such findings indicate that a business-as-usual approach to recruitment, screening, training, matching, case management, and evaluation may expose LGBTQQ youth to additional risks and the potential for long-term harm at a time when these young people are most in need of care, advocacy, and having someone in their corner.

As a response to these concerns and as a part of a shared commitment by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) and MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership (MENTOR) to improve mentoring services to all children and youth across the country, *the LGBTQ Supplement to the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* offers step-by-step operations guidance to develop safer, more affirming, and responsive mentoring relationships for LGBTQQ youth.

About the Terminology Used in this Supplement

The authors of this supplement have chosen to use the acronym LGBTQQ youth as an umbrella term that is inclusive of diverse spectrums of sexual orientations and gender identities in young people. This acronym includes (but is not limited to) young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. In addition, there is an important need to highlight early experiences with sexual minority and gender minority identity development during the time that many children and youth participate in youth mentoring programs. Because of the importance of how this experience parallels time in the care of mentoring program staff, the authors have also included questioning as part of this acronym.

For adults, the acronym LGBTQ is used. This acronym includes (but is not limited to) adults who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. Although many individuals may still navigate through various phases of sexual identity or gender identity development throughout adulthood, the age most often associated with questioning has trended lower and is now much more closely associated with the period of adolescence (see the work of Cass;⁴ McCarn and Fassinger;⁵ D'Aughelli⁶). To learn more about the use of key terms, concepts, and language within this supplement, please see the glossary in this section.



Getting Started: A Glossary of Acronyms, Terms, and Definitions

Understanding the following terms, definitions, and language can be helpful in working effectively with the LGBTQ community. Many of these terms are used throughout this supplement.

Ally: A person who is not LGBTQ but shows support for LGBTQ people and promotes equality in a variety of ways.

Androgynous: A term used to describe someone who identifies and/or presents as neither distinguishably masculine nor feminine.

Asexual: A term used to describe a person who does not experience sexual attraction.

Biphobia: Prejudice, fear, or hatred directed toward bisexual people.

Bisexual: A person emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to more than one gender though not necessarily simultaneously, in the same way or to the same degree.

Butch: Commonly used to refer to masculinity displayed by a female but can also refer to masculinity displayed by a male.

Cisgender: A term used to describe a person whose gender identity aligns with that typically associated with the sex assigned to them at birth.

Cisnormative: The assumption that everyone is cisgender, and that cisgender identities are superior to transidentities or people.

Closeted: A term used to describe an LGBTQ person who has not disclosed their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Coming Out: The process in which a person first acknowledges, accepts, and appreciates their sexual-orientation or gender identity and begins to disclose that identity to others. The concept is used more in relationship to sexual orientation but can be applied to gender identity—though the process differs significantly between SO and GI.

Cultural Competence: The ability to interact effectively with people of different cultures. Culturally competent organizations should have a defined set of values and principles and demonstrate behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally.

Femme: A term used to describe someone who exhibits notably feminine traits, most often (but not always) referring to a lesbian, bisexual, or queer woman.

Gay: A term used to describe a person who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted to people of the same gender.

Gender Binary: A system in which gender is constructed into two strict categories of male or female. Gender identity is expected to align with the sex assigned at birth and gender expressions and roles fit traditional expectations.

Gender Dysphoria: Describes the distress that a person may experience when perceived as a gender that does not match their gender identity, or from physical characteristics that don't match their gender identity. Many transgender people experience gender dysphoria at some point in their lives, although taking steps to affirm one's gender identity can reduce or eliminate it. In the most recent version of the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Gender Dysphoria is also the formal diagnosis applied to transgender people seeking mental health support for their transition.

Definitions adapted, with permission, from Human Rights Campaign and the training materials offered through their All Children – All Families project: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/all-children-all-families-about-the-initiative>



INTRODUCTION: GLOSSARY

Gender-Expansive: A term that conveys a wider, more flexible range of gender identity and/or expression than typically associated with the gender binary system. Sometimes used to describe young people who are comfortable with the sex they were assigned at birth and don't conform to stereotypes that people hold for their sex.

Gender Expression: External appearance of one's gender, usually shown through behavior, clothing, haircut, or voice, and which may or may not conform to socially defined behaviors and characteristics typically associated with being either masculine or feminine.

Gender History: Information related to a transgender or non-binary person's sex, name, and pronouns assigned at birth, as well as aspects of their past social, legal, and/or medical transitions.

Gender Identity: One's internal sense of being male, female, a blend of both, or neither—how individuals perceive themselves and what they call themselves. One's gender identity can be the same or different from their sex assigned at birth.

Gender Role: This is the set of expectations and behaviors assigned to females and males by society. Every culture and community has its own expectations about how men/boys and women/girls should behave, and these expectations often shift over time.

Gender Nonconforming: A broad term referring to people who do not behave in a way that aligns to the traditional expectations of their gender, or whose gender expression does not fit neatly into a category.

Gender Fluid: Refers to being unconfined by one single gender identity and able to identify with neither, both and/or other gender(s) (in regards to the masculine/feminine gender binary), at different points in time.

Genderqueer: Genderqueer people typically reject static categories of gender and often, though not always, sexual orientation. People who identify as genderqueer may see themselves as being both male and female, neither male nor female, or as falling completely outside these categories.

Gender Transition: The process by which some people strive to more closely align their gender identity with their outward appearance. Some people socially transition, whereby they might begin dressing, using names and pronouns, and/or be socially recognized as another gender. Others undergo medical transitions in which they modify their bodies through medical interventions. There are also legal aspects to transitioning (e.g., changing gender marker on birth certificate).

Heterosexism: The attitude that heterosexuality is the only valid sexual orientation. Often takes the form of ignoring LGBTQ people. For example: a form that only lists "mother" and "father."

Heterosexual: A term used to describe people whose emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions are to people of another gender. Also: straight

Heteronormative: The assumption of heterosexuality as the default sexual orientation instead of one of many possibilities, and that the preferred relationship is between two people of "opposite" genders.

Homophobia: The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, people who are attracted to people of the same gender.

Homosexual: Outdated clinical term considered derogatory and offensive by many gay people. Gay and/or lesbian are more commonly accepted terms to describe people who are attracted to members of the same gender.

Internalized Homophobia: Negative attitudes that a lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer person may adopt about their own sexual orientation after receiving stigmatizing messages from their culture.

Intersex: An umbrella term used to describe a wide range of natural bodily variations. In some cases, these traits are visible at birth, while in others they are not apparent until puberty. Some chromosomal variations of this type may not be physically apparent at all.



INTRODUCTION: GLOSSARY

Lesbian: A term used to describe a woman who is emotionally, romantically, or sexually attracted primarily to other women.

LGBTQ: An abbreviation for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning.

Lifestyle: Inaccurate term that many LGBTQ people find offensive. Avoid using this term because just as there is no one straight or non-LGBTQ lifestyle, there is no one LGBTQ lifestyle.

Living Openly: A state in which LGBTQ people are comfortably out about their sexual orientation or transgender status—where and when it feels appropriate to them.

Non-Binary: An adjective referring to any person whose gender identity is neither male nor female.

Outing: Exposing someone's LGBTQ identity to others without their permission. Outing someone can have serious repercussions on employment, economic stability, personal safety, or religious community and family relationships.

Pansexual: Describes someone who has the potential for sexual attraction to people of any gender.

Queer: This term can be used as an umbrella term for LGBT, to express a rejection of other gender and sexual orientation labels, or to describe sexual attraction to people of more than one gender. Historically, queer has been used as a negative term for LGBTQ people. Some people still find the term offensive while others have embraced the term. It should be used carefully.

Questioning: A term used to describe people who are in the process of exploring their sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression.

Same-Gender Loving: A term some prefer to use instead of LGBTQ to express attraction to and love of people of the same gender. This term is especially common among African Americans.

Sex: A category, usually either male or female, assigned based on physiological characteristics including chromosomes, sex hormone levels, and genitalia.

Sexual Identity: This is how we perceive and what we call ourselves. Such labels include lesbian, gay, bisexual, bi, queer, questioning, heterosexual, straight, and others. Sexual identity (how we define ourselves) and sexual behavior can be chosen, unlike sexual orientation which cannot.

Sexual Orientation: A person's emotional, romantic, and sexual attraction to other people.

Sexual Preference: A term sometimes used to mean the same thing as sexual orientation. Many LGBTQ people find this term to be offensive because it implies that their sexual orientation is a choice.

Sexuality: How one experiences and expresses one's self as a sexual being.

SOGIE: An abbreviation combining sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression, that has become one of the main reference terms to describe the LGBT community.

Transgender: A term used to describe people whose gender identity does not match expectations based on the sex they were assigned at birth. A transgender experience does not imply any specific sexual orientation. Therefore, trans people may be straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, etc.

Transphobia: The fear and hatred of, or discomfort with, transgender people.

Transsexual: A term used to describe people whose gender identity does not conform to their sex assigned at birth and who often seek medical treatment to bring their body and gender identity into alignment. In most cases, the term transgender is more appropriate.



Experiences of LGBTQ Youth

An estimated 3.2 million youth—approximately 7 percent of all 8- to 18-year-olds in the United States—are LGBTQ.⁷ Although many of these youth have access to positive support systems and families that love and accept them, research shows that more than half experience one or more factors that place them at risk of not developing into healthy adults.⁸ Documented risk factors include:

- **Stigma and bias.** LGBTQ youth are often exposed to messaging that marginalizes, “others,” and stigmatizes them. Over the last several years, for example, nearly 20 states have attempted to codify laws that would allow discrimination against LGBTQ people.⁹ A 2016 law in Tennessee, for example, makes it legal for counselors to deny mental health services to LGBTQ patients—including youth who may be struggling with depression—based on sincerely held beliefs.¹⁰ In Mississippi, [a law that went into effect in 2017](#) states that “male (man) or female (woman) refer to an individual’s immutable biological sex as objectively determined by anatomy and genetics at time of birth” and that the state government cannot discriminate against any individual who denies services, accommodations, counseling, employment, and housing to transgender people based on religious beliefs.¹¹ These examples highlight patterns of homophobia and transphobic messaging that can easily be internalized by LGBTQ youth who are hearing that their well-being, safety, and future may be at risk if they share their truth with others.
- **Victimization and bullying.** In school settings, a number of studies have documented the scale of victimization and bullying experienced by LGBTQ students. In a study conducted by GLSEN of 10,258 respondents from 3,085 unique school districts,¹² large numbers of students described experiencing hostile school climates: 56.7% felt unsafe at school (because of their sexual orientation); 31.8% missed at least one day of school; 85% experienced verbal harassment from peers; and 56% reported hearing homophobic remarks from staff/teachers at least once during the school year.
- **Parent and family rejection.** Parent and family acceptance is an important indicator for LGBTQ youth well-being. A recent study by the Human Rights Campaign¹³ indicated that two-thirds of LGBTQ youth have heard their families make negative comments about LGBTQ people. LGBTQ youth who experience family rejection are 8.4 times more likely to report a suicide attempt; 5.9 times more likely to describe high levels of depression; and 3.4 times more likely to use illegal drugs.¹⁴
- **Homelessness.** LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ young adults had a 120 percent higher risk of reporting homelessness compared to youth who identified as heterosexual and cisgender.¹⁵ In addition, up to 40 percent of all youth who experience homelessness are believed to be LGBTQ.¹⁶
- **Child welfare systems.** In one study that examined the child welfare system, nearly 20 percent of youth placed in out-of-home care were LGBTQ.¹⁷ Additionally, research has noted that many LGBTQ youth report experiencing violence and harassment in group placements due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.¹⁸



INTRODUCTION: EXPERIENCES, ACCESS AND RESEARCH

- **Juvenile justice involvement.** LGBTQ youth are estimated to comprise 13 to 15 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system.¹⁹ Many juvenile justice systems also appear to be ill-prepared to protect the safety of LGBTQ youth in their care, with reports of staff even trying to convert or punish LGBTQ youth because they were viewed as “deviant” and in need of being changed.²⁰
- **Depression, suicide, and risk-taking behaviors.** According to a study by the Center for Disease Control (CDC), more than 40 percent of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) students considered suicide, 60 percent of LGB students reported feelings of hopelessness, and LGB students were five times more likely to report using illegal drugs than their straight peers.²¹
- **Increased risks for transgender youth.** Research on the experiences of transgender individuals often depict significantly greater risks than for their lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers. For example, a recent survey on the experiences of transgender students found that 54 percent had been verbally harassed, 24 percent had been physically attacked, and 13 percent had been sexually assaulted because they were transgender. Over 15 percent of respondents who experienced such severe mistreatment and victimization left school as a result.²²

LGBTQQ Youth Lack Access to High-Quality Mentoring

LGBTQQ youth face significant risks and challenges that often require additional attention and support from caring adults and advocates. Unfortunately, only a limited number of steps have been taken by the youth mentoring field to extend the reach and benefits of mentoring to this population. As of 2013,

less than five mentoring programs out of nearly 5,000 provided intentional mentoring services to LGBTQ youth.²³ More recently, MENTOR’s 2016 survey of youth mentoring programs found that as few as 6 percent of the nation’s mentees were estimated to be LGBTQ, with the majority of programs indicating they did not possess knowledge of their mentee’s sexual orientation or gender identity or did not track such information in their programs.²⁴

In close association with these findings, a growing body of research has begun to identify potential barriers that prevent LGBTQ youth from accessing services.²⁵ Notably, many agencies require LGBTQ youth to “come out” and self-label, which could alienate questioning youth who are not ready to disclose such information. Such requirements may also leave young people vulnerable to family rejection—especially when parent/guardian consent is required for a child’s participation in the program.

Another barrier is that many providers do not have adequate knowledge of LGBTQ affirmative practices. For example, staff may not be familiar with appropriate resources to support LGBTQ youth and may lack awareness of basic terminology and concepts. Lastly, many agencies may lack policies and clear guidance for how to protect youth confidentiality and to ensure their safety.

These barriers often keep LGBTQ youth from receiving the guidance and support they need. One report estimated that 89 percent of at-risk LGBTQ youth grow up without the benefit of a structured mentoring relationship, and that 37 percent of them grow up without a mentor of any kind.²⁶ Both of these percentages are higher than reported in other research about the prevalence of mentoring across all youth.²⁷



INTRODUCTION: EXPERIENCES, ACCESS AND RESEARCH

A recent review of the research on mentoring LGBTQQ youth²⁸ noted, however, that there is emerging evidence of potential (but tenuous) shifts toward proactively seeking and engaging LGBTQQ youth in mentoring programs—a shift being driven in large part by funders. For example, in 2015 the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) released a solicitation to fund mentoring programming for underserved populations of youth, explicitly including LGBTQQ youth. In both FY 2016 and FY 2017, OJJDP also identified LGBTQQ youth as a special target population for funding of their National Mentoring Program awards.

Corporations and foundations have also started playing a more significant and intentional role in meeting this challenge. In 2016, BBBSA received funding from The Altria Group to pilot inclusive practices and professional development opportunities to help its affiliates welcome and serve LGBTQQ youth more effectively. Through this pilot, BBBSA supports mentoring services which address research demonstrating that LGBTQQ youth engage in risky behaviors including tobacco use at higher rates than non-LGBTQQ youth. This initiative is described in more detail in the “About this Supplement” section back on page 2.

Research on Mentoring LGBTQQ Youth

As research on mentoring LGBTQQ youth is still in its infancy, few studies offer clarity on the unique benefits of mentoring for LGBTQQ youth or have quantified the impact of mentoring on the social, emotional, and physical well-being of LGBTQQ youth.

Although additional inquiry is needed, a recent population review from the National Mentoring Resource Center noted several barriers to conducting research in this space.²⁹ These barriers include: 1) difficulty securing large enough sample sizes of LGBTQQ youth within mentoring programs to conduct rigorous research; 2) requirements for youth to be out in order to participate in LGBTQQ-focused inquiry; and 3) ethical considerations when seeking parent/guardian consent.

Given these challenges and caveats, available literature offers some early insights into ways LGBTQQ youth are able to access and benefit from mentoring relationships. The most comprehensive review to date³⁰ concluded, in part, that:

- In-person mentoring relationships may serve an important protective role for LGBTQQ youth, helping them to confront challenges such as lack of acceptance from peers and parents; however, available research is too limited to offer more than tentative and very preliminary support for this possibility.
- Informal mentoring relationships with adults may promote positive educational outcomes among LGBTQQ youth.
- Some sub-populations of LGBTQQ youth—including youth of color, gender nonconforming youth, transgender youth, youth at earlier phases of identity development, and youth involved with the juvenile justice or foster care systems—may experience intersections of risks that hinder their development of trust, which is seen as the foundation of high-quality, effective mentoring relationships.



INTRODUCTION: EXPERIENCES, ACCESS AND RESEARCH

- Mentors who take youth-centered approaches (those that place the young person’s needs and goals first) that are inclusive of the experiences and needs of LGBTQQ youth may foster greater benefits.
- Ensuring the quality of mentoring relationships for LGBTQQ youth may necessitate the use of mentor-youth matching criteria that are inclusive of—but not limited to—shared sexual orientation and gender identity/expression between youth and mentors.
- Mentors appear well-positioned to offer ongoing support that can attune to the needs of youth as they navigate through phases of exploring, accepting, and sharing their identity with others.
- Mentors who take advocacy roles may be able to offer emotional, informational, and interpersonal support for LGBTQQ youth in ways that provide protection from risks associated with stigma and victimization.
- Youth-serving agencies with inclusive programming and safe climates appear to offer additional levels of protection for LGBTQQ youth against risks, such as depression, that can lead to suicide.

Much of the advice and guidance offered to programs in this supplement draws on this research, as well as from a working group consisting of leaders in the field with experience providing mentoring services to LGBTQQ youth.



DEVELOPMENT OF THIS SUPPLEMENT

This supplement was supported by several key steps and activities:

- An extensive **literature search** that expanded on the one conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice's National Mentoring Resource Center as part of their evidence review, [*Mentoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Gender Nonconforming Youth*](#). That review identified four journal articles and reports that examined mentoring for LGBTQ youth. For this supplement, we reviewed additional scholarly articles and research reports released since 2017. The findings of this research informed many of the recommended practices contained here.
- Assessing the **alignment of the current *Elements*** with the practices developed in the BBBSA initiative. Many of the best practices for serving LGBTQ youth or creating inclusive youth service environments and positive volunteer experiences are covered in the basic Benchmarks and Enhancements of the *Elements* as simply being cornerstone youth development practices that benefit all young people and their mentors. However, in creating this supplement, the BBBSA-developed agency readiness assessment tool was used to compare practices to the baseline practices suggested in the *Elements*, noting where more clarity or nuance was needed to better serve LGBTQ youth or where there was a gap in practice recommendations that needed to be filled via this supplement.
- Soliciting recommendations and refinements from a **working group** of practitioners, researchers, and advocates in the LGBTQ youth services space. This group was invaluable to getting the recommendations in this supplement right in terms of nuance and usefulness to the field. Each member of the group brought their unique perspective and professional experience to bear on the question of what really matters when providing mentors to LGBTQ youth. The group met four times to generate ideas and respond to drafts of the recommendations, with final approval of the recommendations completing the process in the final meeting. BBBSA and MENTOR thank the working group for their contributions to this supplement. Case study profiles of many of their organizations are offered throughout this guide to illustrate what the recommended practices of this resource look like in real program settings. BBBSA and MENTOR hope that other mentoring organizations are inspired by the examples offered by these leaders in the field.



WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS



Craig Bowman

Common Ground Consulting

For more than 25 years, Craig Bowman and his firm, Common Ground Consulting, LLC™ have been providing strategic consulting services for community-based, national, and international social profit organizations. As a leading social sector futurist, Craig has spent his career developing a philosophy of leadership that harnesses passion and trust as a bridge between human potential and social responsibility. His client portfolio includes more than 200 organizations, 25 foundations and consulting firms, 17 government departments and agencies, and students, faculty, and administrators from more than 225 colleges and universities in the United States and abroad. He has worked in 31 countries on five continents. As a results-focused professional, Craig has served as a trainer, advocate, activist, coach, and public policy strategist. From 1994-2007, he served first as the Executive Director of SMYAL, which was DC's only LGBTQ-serving youth organization at that time, and then as the Executive Director of the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC), the nation's only LGBTQ youth social justice organization.

Nia Clark

Independent Consultant/Trainer

As a transgender youth of color who spent most of her childhood in foster care, Nia Clark consistently struggled to find acceptance and support from the adults around her. While most would understandably distance themselves from such rejection and intolerance, Nia has spent more than a decade changing the system from within as a child welfare consultant, nonprofit trainer, and LGBTQ youth advocate. From 2015-2017, Nia was the Mentoring Coordinator at LifeWorks, the youth development and mentorship program at the Los Angeles LGBT Center. In her role, she matched more than 200 LGBTQ+ youth with adult mentors. Nia is currently a trainer for the Human Rights Campaign's All Children - All Families Project, an initiative that provides a framework for child welfare agencies to achieve safety, permanency, and well-being for queer youth by improving their policies and practices. Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA) enlisted her help in launching a national pilot project to provide more inclusive mentoring services and resources to thousands of LGBTQ youth across America. She has trained staff at more than 20 BBBS sites, including Seattle, Denver, Indianapolis, Louisville, and Washington, DC. Nia is a social work major at California State University, Los Angeles. She plans to obtain her MSW and become a social work professor, so she can continue teaching adults to affirm and support LGBTQ youth in systems of care.



WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN
FOUNDATION

Alison Delpercio

Children, Youth and Families Program, Human Rights Campaign Foundation

Through innovative training and direct consultation with schools, child welfare agencies and other service providers, the Children, Youth and Families Program creates welcoming, affirming and supportive environments for LGBTQ prospective parents, LGBTQ-led families and LGBTQ youth. The HRC Foundation is working to open the hearts and minds of people on the front lines of family welfare—teachers, social workers, parent advocates, pediatricians, child welfare professionals and more—so that instead of being mistreated or merely tolerated, LGBTQ youth and families are truly welcomed and made to feel like they belong. Thanks to generous Foundation partners, the HRC Foundation’s Children, Youth and Families Program provides comprehensive professional training, program consulting, technical assistance and ongoing support, through game-changing initiatives including All Children - All Families, Welcoming Schools, Time to THRIVE, and Youth and Campus Engagement.



Mary Fox

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware has been serving Delaware youth and families since 1964, with the firm belief that inherent in every child is the ability to succeed. The agency is committed to providing high-quality, safe, and effective mentoring services for all youth in Delaware facing adversity. In 2017, a CDC study on Youth Risk Behavior reported that 13 percent of Delaware high school students self-identified as LGBTQ and faced significant stressors that put them at greater risk for depression, high-risk behaviors, and suicide. These students were almost twice as likely as non-LGBTQ youth to report not having an adult to talk to about personal problems. The urgent need for a program specifically created for LGBTQ youth was clear and in 2012, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware set out on a one-year pilot project to develop a targeted mentoring program serving LGBTQ youth. Since then, the program continues to evolve, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware proudly serves LGBTQ youth through both one-on-one and group mentoring. To learn more about their programs, including the LGBTQ Mentoring Program, visit www.bbbsde.org.



WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS



Larry Holodak and Daniel Sprehe

The Fellowship Initiative, JPMorgan Chase

The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) provides intensive academic and leadership training to help young men of color from economically-distressed communities complete their high school educations and better prepare them to excel in colleges and universities. TFI is part of the firm's broader ongoing efforts to provide adults and young people with the education, skills and resources that contribute to greater economic mobility.

To date, more than 200 JPMorgan Chase employees have worked with TFI Fellows as Mentors, coaches, role models, speakers, or volunteers in various capacities. Since its launch in 2010, the program has been expanded and will recruit new classes of Fellows in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles and New York.



Jolynn Kenney

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound (BBBSPS) believes all young people can achieve success in life, yet many face obstacles like poverty, discrimination, and family instability. Their goal is to help children develop the resilience and determination necessary to surmount barriers, and they do so by linking them with strong, supportive mentors in one-to-one relationships that change their lives for the better, forever.

BBBSPS began embracing LGBTQ mentors in the 1990s, and in 2002, that acceptance was reflected nationally when Big Brothers Big Sisters of America banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 2016, with input from community stakeholders, BBBSPS and four sister agencies began revamping policies and procedures to prioritize inclusion. These changes will soon roll out nationwide.

Amid the systemic change, BBBSPS continues to prioritize one-to-one relationships that make life better for youth facing adversity in their community. More than 70 LGBTQ mentors, youth, and parents currently participate in their programs, and they hope to welcome more in the years to come.



WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS



Lisa Kenney

Gender Spectrum

Gender Spectrum is a leading national nonprofit focused on gender and youth and working to create gender-sensitive and inclusive environments, so all children and young people can develop their full, true selves. They provide education, training, resources, and support to parents and families, educators and other youth-serving professionals, young people, faith leaders, corporations and institutions, and others. Their online groups and programs are accessible sources of accurate, up-to-date information on gender, youth, parenting, and professional development. Their annual conference is the country's oldest and largest gathering exclusively for families with transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive children and teens. As a society, we cannot afford to lose the innovation, creativity, and authenticity of our youth that occurs when they are forced into rigid gender stereotypes. Gender Spectrum envisions a world in which all children feel loved and supported in their gender and are free to be who they are. Learn more at www.genderspectrum.org or contact them at info@genderspectrum.org.



Robin McHaelen

True Colors

In 2018, True Colors is celebrating its 25th anniversary in working to create a world in which youth of all sexual orientations and gender identities are valued and affirmed. Their programs include the production of the country's largest LGBTQ youth issues conference; a public/private partnership focused on policy and programming with Connecticut's Departments of Children and Families as well as the Court Support Services (which is responsible for juvenile justice in Connecticut); cultural competency training, with more than 5,000 youth-serving professionals annually; youth leadership programming in school-based settings; and Connecticut's only mentoring program for LGBTQ youth. True Colors is one of the only LGBTQ mentoring programs in the country to specialize in providing mentoring services for LGBTQ youth in out-of-home care including foster care, group homes, residential treatment facilities, and detention centers, and they have been doing so since 2005.



WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN
DEVELOPMENT AND
FAMILY STUDIES

Dr. Ryan Watson

University of Connecticut

Dr. Ryan J. Watson is an Assistant Professor in the department of Human Development and Family Studies at the University of Connecticut. He explores risk and protective factors for vulnerable adolescents pertaining to health (e.g., substance use experiences, HIV, and mental health) with a focus on interpersonal relationships. Dr. Watson situates himself as a mixed-methods interdisciplinary family scientist and draws from life course and developmental frameworks. To further advance the scholarship of interpersonal relationships and sexual minority youth, Dr. Watson has used both population-based and nonprobability data sets from the United States, Norway, and Canada to examine how social support (friends, teachers, and parents) may attenuate the impact of risk factors such as victimization, homophobia, and stigma on well-being. He continues to research how social support provides a foundation for achievement and healthy outcomes for vulnerable youth. In addition, Dr. Watson has led a qualitative study that explores the motivations and outcomes for “hooking up” among sexual and gender minority populations. His work explores the ways in which the use of different platforms to initiate and engage in hookups differs by sexual orientation subgroups.



Dr. Torie Weiston-Serdan

Youth Mentoring Action Network

The Youth Mentoring Action Network (YMAN) was founded in 2007 with the mission of leveraging the power of mentoring to create a more equitable and just society for young people. Founded by two veteran educators who understand the importance of making solid connections with young people, YMAN recognizes that young people are at their best when their voices are heard, and they feel fully supported. YMAN helps mentoring and youth development organizations be more effective in working with marginalized youth populations, such as LGBTQ youth, Black youth, Latinx youth, immigrant youth, and low-income youth. To learn more, please visit www.yman.org.



WORKING GROUP PARTICIPANTS AND ORGANIZATIONS



Dr. Chris White

(formerly of) Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (GSA Network)

Genders & Sexualities Alliance Network (GSA Network) is a next-generation LGBTQ racial and gender justice organization that empowers and trains queer, transgender, and allied youth leaders to advocate, organize, and mobilize an intersectional movement for safer schools and healthier communities. GSA is an intergenerational, multiracial organization that utilizes a youth-focused model to empower youth, encourage youth voices to be an integral part of the decision-making process in schools and communities, affirm the importance of youth/adult partnerships, and specifically focus on racial and gender justice. They utilize this model to encourage schools to protect and expand access to GSA clubs, create LGBTQ-inclusive curricula, provide training on parental and family acceptance, and create supportive school and community environments. When schools implement these practices, all students report feeling safer and more supported, less name-calling and discrimination, and greater school connectedness.



REFLECTIONS AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS

There are a few key ideas for mentoring programs to consider while reading through the rest of this guide and embarking on a journey that ensures more LGBTQQ youth receive mentoring services.

- The work of making key changes in order to provide affirmative, inclusive, safe mentoring services to LGBTQQ youth facing adversity requires a deep commitment to improvement. Program improvement can only occur when the program possesses the humility to admit that services can be improved and when the program leadership makes a purposeful effort to change.
- Many of the BBBSA Affiliates participating in the LGBTQ Mentoring Initiative faced challenges in implementing changes in practice, or even with staff engagement, that resulted in tough conversations within the agency. We encourage all programs to consider how improved services for LGBTQQ youth fits into the mission and vision of the mentoring program more broadly.
- Mentoring programs are not in this alone—there are organizations in almost every community that can help mentoring programs get professional development for staff or volunteers, assess current efforts, or offer LGBTQ mentors and mentees opportunities to get involved in other activities that enrich the mentoring experience. In fact, one of the sets of recommendations in the next section focuses on partnerships and engagements with LGBTQ organizations, which may be essential to serving these youth well.
- Serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively will likely translate into serving all mentees better. One of the major themes of this supplement is that of intersectionality, the notion that no individual is solely

defined by just one trait and that the combination of traits we each possess work together to make us stronger. Readers will likely note that many of the practices recommended here—gathering better information at intake, respecting the confidentiality and identity of youth, considering policy changes that can allow for better matching, improving outreach and partnerships—could easily be applied to other marginalized groups of youth and to segments of the adult community that are underutilized as mentors. We encourage programs to think about how they can apply these recommendations to more groups, if not all the youth they serve.

Using this guide

Readers should note that this guide serves as only a supplement to the full *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*. It is intended to provide additional guidance and nuance to the items found in the full *Elements*, and references Benchmarks and Enhancements described more fully in that document. Here we mostly cover the Benchmarks and Enhancements that we felt needed additional recommendations for serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively. However, mentoring programs are still encouraged to implement all of the Benchmarks (and as many Enhancements as possible, when appropriate) from the entire set of Standards in the *Elements*. Readers are encouraged to also have a copy of the full *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* on hand as they review this guide so that they can have access to the full complement of practices that MENTOR recommends they use to guide their work.



REFLECTIONS AND KEY CONSIDERATIONS: USING THIS GUIDE

The guide is divided into three major sections:

1. Program Design and Management

This section offers a starting point for mentoring programs that want to improve their inclusion of LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors and ensure that they are reducing the harm they may inadvertently do when engaging LGBTQ clients and stakeholders. This section emphasizes recommendations for the critical step of assessing a program's current work with LGBTQ populations and responding to gaps and weaknesses with policy and procedural changes that can have a lasting impact on quality improvement.

2. Standards of Practice for Serving LGBTQ Youth and Their Mentors

This section covers the six core Standards of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*[™]. Specific recommendations for better serving LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors (and allies) are offered around Benchmarks and Enhancements related to:

- Recruiting
- Screening
- Training
- Matching and Initiation
- Monitoring and Support
- Closure

3. Program Evaluation

This section offers tips for mentoring practitioners on how they can strengthen their program evaluation strategies around the services they provide LGBTQ youth and the outcomes these youth derive from the program.

Throughout each of these sections, readers will find case study examples of these practices in action from our working group members and the Affiliates that participated in BBBSA's national initiative. The authors of this guide hope these real-life examples help other practitioners better understand and implement innovations in their programs.



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The following recommendations offer suggested practices for mentoring organizations to ensure that their organizational climate, program services, and staff members are well positioned to effectively serve LGBTQ youth and the broader LGBTQ community.

Program Values and Commitment

□ Program commits to intentionally providing inclusive, affirming, and safe mentoring services to LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors.

□ This commitment—often embedded in an agency’s overall mission to provide services to all youth in its community—is tied to a formalized process of continually improving and ensuring that programming reflects the unique experiences of LGBTQ youth, and their parents/guardians, as well as LGBTQ mentors, staff, allies, and others in the program and community. Such a process must include:

- Ongoing assessment of how the program can be more inclusive and welcoming and a recognition and mind-set that there are always areas for improvement. This assessment process should include:
 - An authentic and candid review of the program’s historical interactions with and experiences serving members of the LGBTQ community.
 - A comprehensive assessment of the organizational readiness of the program to serve the LGBTQ community effectively, including examining program leadership (board members, executive team, etc.) and staff

members’ ability to work effectively with LGBTQ youth, LGBTQ mentors, and other stakeholders.

- A commitment to safely serving LGBTQ youth and working effectively with LGBTQ participants, even if this requires ending relationships with staff members, prospective mentors, board members, donors, other stakeholders, and even youth participants whose views, behaviors, and attitudes are incompatible with this commitment.
- Honoring and taking seriously the voices and experiences of LGBTQ youth, supportive parents/guardians of LGBTQ youth, and mentors and other caring adult allies in their feedback about how the program is serving LGBTQ youth.
- A willingness to maintain program principles of inclusiveness, even in the face of pressure from funders, policymakers, or community members to change their work with LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors in unproductive ways.
- A general adherence and commitment to the ethical principles detailed in the fourth edition of *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, which take on critical importance with respect to serving LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ adults:
 - Promote the welfare and safety of the young person.
 - Be trustworthy and responsible.
 - Act with integrity.
 - Promote justice for young people.
 - Respect the young person’s rights and dignity.
 - Honor youth and family voice in designing and delivering services.
 - Strive for equity, cultural responsiveness, and positive social change.



Policies and Procedures

- ❑ Program nondiscrimination policies are explicitly inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression for all youth, parents/guardians, mentors, staff, and other stakeholders.
- ❑ Program policies—especially in site-based mentoring programs—include anti-bullying language that specifically mentions bullying related to sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression and are applied to youth and adult participants and stakeholders. Such policies are prominently displayed or shared so that they are well known by all participants and staff.
- ❑ Program policies and procedures provide guidance on how program staff and mentors will talk with parents/guardians about a mentee’s sexuality and how they will respond to youth who come out or transition during their time in the program.
- ❑ Program policies and procedures provide guidance on how program staff and mentors will talk with parents/guardians about a mentee’s sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, and how they will respond to youth who experience changes in their orientation, identity, and expression during their time in the program.
- ❑ Program develops and implements a confidentiality policy that protects information related to the LGBTQQ profile of youth during intake and throughout their time in the programs, especially guaranteeing the protection of information that can impact the safety and well-being of youth who are transitioning. This includes policies about what information regarding sexual orientation, gender identity, or gender expression is shared (or not) with parents/guardians and other key individuals in the young person’s life.
- ❑ Program defines practices related to the potential fluidity of LGBTQQ youth, including how the program will update records over time given changes in sexual orientation, and/or gender identity and expression.
- ❑ Program records (e.g., intake forms or evaluation instruments) are inclusive of diverse LGBTQ populations (i.e., personal gender pronouns, preferred name, etc.).
- ❑ Program intake procedures allow for the program to gather information from mentors and mentees about their own sexual orientation and gender identity/expression to assist with making effective matches or supporting the young person during their time in the program.

Program Leadership

- ❑ Program seeks and retains board and staff members representative of diverse LGBTQ populations, as well as allies who can further support the program’s work with LGBTQ individuals.

Staff Development and Training

- ❑ Program assesses current staff knowledge about and experience working with LGBTQQ youth and adults and may consider requesting the support of staff members who have extensive knowledge of, or experience with, LGBTQQ youth or the LGBTQ community in designing future training content.
- ❑ Program staff is trained on critical information related to LGBTQQ youth:
 - Definitions related to sexual orientation (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.).
 - Definitions related to gender identity/expression (e.g., transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, etc.).



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- Demographics of LGBTQQ youth, including the estimated numbers of LGBTQQ youth at the national or state and local levels.
 - Risk factors for LGBTQQ youth at home and at school/in the community, including research that documents heightened experiences with homelessness, juvenile justice involvement, victimization, and bullying, as well as deficits in accessing developmental assets often associated with growing into a healthy adulthood.
 - The intersectionality of LGBTQQ youth with race, ethnicity, poverty, geography, and other demographic characteristics, as well as how intersectionality can magnify youth risk factors.
 - Common sexual behaviors among youth and youth attitudes about sex and identity (including LGBTQQ youth) and how these behaviors and attitudes may differ based on generation.
 - Resiliency and protective factors for LGBTQQ youth.
 - Other relevant theories and research applicable to serving LGBTQQ youth, such as processes of healthy identity development, the importance of creating a safe and affirming program climate, and/or principles of trauma-informed care.
- **All staff are also trained on attitudes, skills, and procedural activities that will allow them to serve LGBTQQ youth and adults effectively, including:**
- The importance of getting to know each mentee and their unique strengths, challenges, and areas for potential growth and not assuming that being LGBTQQ is inherently determinative of any level of risk or specific negative behaviors or experiences.
 - Barriers to trust that LGBTQQ youth may face when participating in mentoring relationships.
 - Exploring their own biases (conscious or unconscious), attitudes, and levels of comfort regarding serving LGBTQ individuals and how to recognize when these factors can lead to negative interactions, even unintentionally.
 - Understanding the coming out process for LGBTQQ youth, including uniquely experienced developmental milestones for understanding, accepting, and sharing an LGBTQ identity, handling disclosures, understanding youth choices and concerns related to being out, and how to provide support over time during critical moments and changes in identity and expression.
 - Avoiding countertransference of one's own experiences as an LGBTQQ youth or young adult onto the mentee.
 - Managing known information about out status of mentees, which should be articulated in the program's confidentiality policy. These policies should ideally respect mentees' desires around confidentiality and disclosure of information. This can be especially critical for youth whose parents or guardians might not be receptive to changes in their status and for youth who may not be out in all parts of their lives.
 - Responding nonjudgmentally and with empathy to mentees' disclosures about risky or unhealthy behaviors (e.g., sex practices, substance abuse, skipping school, etc.) and engaging in meaningful discussions about such behaviors.



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- Skills for working effectively day-to-day with LGBTQ youth and adults, such as respectful use of personal pronouns and affirming language to use with parents/guardians of LGBTQ youth.
 - Awareness of how the intersecting identities of LGBTQ youth (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) impact their individual experiences and the support they will, in turn, need from their mentors and the program as a whole.
 - Boundary setting and other relationship skills that can prevent misunderstandings (e.g., not shaming a young person for having same-sex romantic feelings; helping to channel mentor/mentee boundary setting conversations into strategies to help the mentee identify traits and characteristics of healthy, age-appropriate, and respectful relationships).
 - Handling circumstances where parents or guardians of LGBTQ youth express negative reactions to their child's sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (or changes or disclosures that happen during their time in the program).
 - Local referral resources for the health, safety, and well-being of diverse groups of LGBTQ youth.
- ❑ Staff are trained on how to communicate effectively with LGBTQ youth, volunteers, parents/guardians, and community members during recruitment, enrollment/intake, and match support.
 - ❑ Staff training involves role-plays, scenario-based discussions, and other opportunities to practice reactions to situations and learn effective ways of responding and ensuring youth safety and confidentiality is prioritized.

Community Partnerships and Advocacy

- ❑ Program establishes partnerships with local, regional, and, when appropriate, national organizations serving the LGBTQ community. These partnerships can be beneficial in a number of ways, such as recruiting mentors and mentees, providing supplemental program activities and learning opportunities, and facilitating referrals to other services to help support mentors, mentees, and families.
- ❑ Program participates in national and local LGBTQ awareness campaigns and events, such as Pride, No Name-Calling Week, Transgender Awareness Week, National Coming Out Day, Transgender Day of Remembrance, and others.
- ❑ Program encourages staff participation in local and/or national professional development opportunities to raise awareness of strategies for supporting LGBTQ youth.

Program Improvement Processes

- ❑ Program intentionally provides LGBTQ youth (and, if appropriate, LGBTQ mentors) with an opportunity to have a voice in programming and provide feedback on feelings of safety and inclusion in the program.



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- ❑ Program provides LGBTQQ youth (and, if appropriate, LGBTQ mentors) with an opportunity to, either annually or as part of a consistent cycle, review the program's:
 - Recruitment materials and the online presence of the program.
 - Screening materials and processes.
 - Training curricula and other teaching materials.
 - Matching procedures and the criteria considered for LGBTQQ youth.
 - Procedures for checking in with matches and offering ongoing support.
 - Closure practices, including the connection to additional mentors outside of the program.
 - Data collection and evaluation instruments and procedures.

Physical Space

The program's physical space provides access to safe facilities for transgender and gender expansive youth, volunteers, and families, such as gender-neutral bathrooms, changing areas, or other public accommodations.

Signals of Inclusivity

After addressing organizational considerations related to program values and commitment, program leadership, policies and procedures, staff development and training, community partnerships and advocacy, program improvement processes, and the program's physical space, the program displays the following signals of inclusivity:

- ❑ Safe zone posters, brochures and handouts, poster boards for campaigns, and other visual cues affirming that the agency is a welcoming place for LGBTQQ youth and that youth and their families will receive appropriate services.
- ❑ Language or visuals on the organization's website affirming that the organization is a welcoming place for LGBTQQ youth (e.g., rainbow flag, transgender flag).

SAFE
RESPECT dignity
IDENTITY
trust UNDERSTANDING
acceptance
love ORIENTATION
community
gender



DISCUSSION

Developing a program culture and set of mentoring policies and procedures that meet the diverse needs of LGBTQ youth requires considerable commitment and proactive planning, as well as meaningful engagement by program leadership, funders, staff members, and other stakeholders. Making sure that a mentoring program is not only welcoming and inclusive of the LGBTQ community but also able to respond effectively to the challenges LGBTQ youth face can involve some difficult conversations and a need for authentic self-reflection. Thus, this section addresses key organizational values and how those values will be operationalized in both policy and in the day-to-day activities of the program.

Much of this work starts with an assessment of how the agency is currently doing in serving LGBTQ youth and engaging members of the LGBTQ community as mentors, funders, and partners in the work. Based on this initial assessment programs can then move to making improvements to their day-to-day practices and communication based on their level of readiness for change in this area. The recommended practices in the remainder of this section can help a program’s overarching philosophy, infrastructure, and personnel effectively serve LGBTQ youth and the broader LGBTQ community.



Program Values and Philosophy

Most youth-serving organizations, including mentoring programs, have a mission or values statement that outlines in broad terms what they hope to achieve for young people and the positive environment they hope to create. Unfortunately, we know that in spite of these stated values, the experiences of LGBTQQ youth within these programs often fall far below the standard set on paper. Despite possessing inclusive mission and values statements, the majority of mentoring programs today are still not intentionally creating safe and affirming services for LGBTQQ youth in their care.

Thus, the first step in serving LGBTQQ youth more effectively is recognizing that all youth-serving organizations likely have opportunities for improvement

in this area and that there needs to be a strong commitment to identifying and addressing service gaps or negative aspects of how LGBTQQ youth (and LGBTQ mentors) participate in and benefit from the program. A continuous improvement mind-set can help programs start making progress no matter where on the spectrum of inclusive services they currently fall. Some agencies may find they have a lot of work to do, while others will take some pride in finding they have already embraced many of the practices recommended in this guide. What matters most is that programs boldly make a commitment to intentionally providing safe, responsive, and affirming mentoring services for

LGBTQQ youth. That is a mind-set and a reflection of organizational values that are nonnegotiable in this work.

There are several steps that a program can take to operationalize its commitment to serving LGBTQQ youth better. Perhaps the most important ones suggested here have to do with assessing the current landscape of the program. This ideally begins by listening to the LGBTQQ youth already being served by the program and perhaps reaching out to alumni to hear their experiences of their time in the program. Gathering feedback from current mentors and the families of youth will also be valuable in letting program leadership know how their organization's services are perceived and areas where they can improve. Anonymous online surveys, focus groups, and one-on-one interviews with these participants can all yield actionable information.

It should be noted, however, that investigating the historical and current experiences of participants, as well as the perspectives of staff, funders, board members, and other stakeholders, may lead to some challenging conversations and circumstances. Many programs will feel uncomfortable discussing the more painful or problematic attitudes or actions that are revealed by an honest appraisal like this. It can be helpful if these assessments are led by a neutral third party that can gather information without judgment or bias and then lead a process by which the findings and needed changes are discussed without bringing their own agenda to the conversation. The evaluation process implemented by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America described in



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the Introduction used external facilitators to gather information and lead discussions about how to approach improvements, something that helped each BBBS Affiliate honestly assess its efforts to date and think creatively about solutions without fear of judgment.*

Some programs may face difficult decisions after conducting an assessment of their work with the LGBTQ community. This process may bring to light differences between the organization's values and level of commitment in this area, and the opinions of funders, board members, or even staff members who feel differently about LGBTQ youth or the LGBTQ community more generally.

We strongly encourage programs to make choices that support their commitment to serving the LGBTQ community, even if it means parting ways with long-time stakeholders, staff, or supporters.

The ethical principles included in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* are there to guide you through tough decisions where values seem to be in conflict. Programs are encouraged to avoid working with individuals or institutions who may create a less safe or even harmful environments and experiences for LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors. There is no place in this work for individuals who do not respect rights and dignity for all, and who, through their

beliefs, words, and actions, cannot promote the welfare of, or justice for, LGBTQ youth.

Policies and Procedures

While the fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* offers several examples of the types of policies that mentoring programs should have in place and share with participants, there are a few additional recommendations that can help mentoring programs support LGBTQ youth better and increase participants' safety.

Several of the recommendations in this section relate to the program's confidentiality policy and the way that programs gather, protect, and, when appropriate, share information about LGBTQ disclosures of mentees. Programs will want to pay particular attention to:

- **The information collected at intake.** We recommend that programs collect information about sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression (commonly referred to by the acronym SOGIE) when prospective mentees enter the program. Programs may also want to consider collecting this information from prospective mentors as well. This information can be invaluable in making sure that program staff and mentors are aware of the unique preferences, circumstances, and needs of mentees, helping with everything from ensuring the use of personal pronouns when conversing with youth to knowing which community resources or supports might further enhance the mentoring experience. It can also provide critical information

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about mentors to youth they are matched with, and even support program evaluation by allowing the program to examine differential outcomes for youth based on their demographic profile.

However, there is a lot to consider before an agency begins collecting SOGIE data. The Human Rights Campaign offers a comprehensive guide, [SOGIE Data Collection](#),¹ which begins with a robust chapter on assessing readiness to collect this information, including some questions to ask staff about their readiness and capacity to gather and protect this information and their motivations for doing so.

- **How information will be updated and maintained.**

Policies should also govern how changes will be made to program records if young people come out as a sexual minority or disclose additional information about their gender identity. It is highly likely that a program serving adolescents will need to update its records based on how youth want to be addressed. Having policies and processes in place for keeping this information up to date and known by key staff will help the program meet the needs and preferences of young people throughout their time in the program.

- **How information will be protected and who has access to it (and how).** Confidentiality policies often detail what information is protected by the program, who can access it, and when and how it is shared with others beyond critical staff. These policies are especially important in terms of honoring the wishes of LGBTQ youth about who is aware of their sexual orientation or gender

identity, recognizing that they may be “out” to some individuals but not others, including their own parents/guardians or their mentor. Mentoring programs should have written policies that clearly describe the limited situations in which information regarding a child’s disclosure is shared with a parent/guardian and others. Keep in mind that being LGBTQ—in and of itself—is not a situation covered by statewide legal mandatory reporting requirements. However, sharing this information may actually place a child at risk and could potentially cause harm to the child. The organization Family Builders by Adoption offers an [excellent resource](#) for professionals on crafting guidelines and policies for the collection, use, and disclosure of SOGIE information in youth-serving organizations. In general, it recommends that programs consider disclosure of SOGIE information through this lens:

“Child welfare professionals should regard children as the principle owners of information related to their sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and should actively involve them in decisions related to any disclosure of this information.”²

The guide also recommends documenting the rationale for any disclosure and ensuring compliance with state and local laws and court orders.



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In addition to policies and procedures around SOGIE data and confidentiality, programs might also want to examine their anti-bullying policies and make sure that they specifically mention bullying behaviors directed toward mentees who are LGBTQQ.

Programs often assume that a blanket anti-bullying policy inherently covers LGBTQQ youth adequately, but there is value in spelling out exactly which groups are protected so that everyone is clear on where behavioral lines are drawn.

Research in school contexts has found that schools with comprehensive anti-bullying policies (i.e., those that explicitly include LGBTQQ youth) are more likely to have lower rates of victimization for LGBTQQ students and higher levels of reporting homophobic harassment.³ A strong and comprehensive anti-bullying policy can go a long way toward improving the day-to-day experiences of youth in an organizational context.

Lastly, we recommend that matching policies also clearly articulate the role that SOGIE data, both of youth and prospective mentors, will be used in the matching process. While this information is likely to be one of many factors considered when making a match, explicitly stating that this information has value to the organization in trying to find just the

right fit to meet a youth's needs may be a welcome signal to LGBTQQ youth and their parents/guardians and for LGBTQ volunteers.

For one example of how a local mentoring program manages the confidentiality of their SOGIE data while also using it to make stronger matches, see the case study on BBBS of Puget Sound in the sidebar.

Program Leadership

We encourage programs to make use of the LGBTQ voices on the staff and in leadership when making the types of changes recommended in this supplement, as well as to, on an ongoing basis, ensure that LGBTQ adults are actively recruited for and placed into a variety of roles in the organization. Programs should get a sense of the allies they already have in this work, and, if their representation is low, some active and targeted recruitment may be in order.

Organizations can expect, based on the experiences of the BBBSA pilot project, that change around issues of inclusiveness for LGBTQQ youth and LGBTQ mentors can often move slower than some staff or clients would like. But those staff members who are committed to making positive changes should continue to insist that program leadership proceed on a path toward inclusivity and that they take the experiences of these youth seriously when making program improvements.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound updated its policies and procedures in 2016 to ensure that all program materials are reflective of the agency's commitment to serving LGBTQ youth and fostering a safe and inclusive environment for all. In an effort to best meet the needs of Littles and their families, BBBS of Puget Sound asks parents/caregivers for their preferences regarding a potential mentor's background, including the mentor's race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Some caregivers enroll their LGBTQ-identified child into the program because they have particular goals—whether they want the young person to feel more comfortable in their identity, have positive role models that reflect the young person's SOGIE, or just connect with a supportive adult who can relate to their experiences—and our recently refreshed intake form encourages those preferences to be shared and prioritized. The parent/caregiver application also includes a checkbox indicating whether the family would like to learn more about BBBS of Puget Sound's LGBTQ programming.

Littles are also given the opportunity to share information about their identity and about their preferences for their potential Big's identity. The updated intake form includes a fill-in-the-blank field for "gender" rather than the previous drop-down menu of prescribed options. During the intake process, Littles are asked about their romantic relationship (if they have one) and what they would like their Bigs to be like. These open-ended questions allow space for Littles to discuss their sexual orientation and gender identity if they wish, without being asked directly about a topic they may not be ready to address.

BBBS of Puget Sound also asks mentors to sign a confidentiality agreement that contains policies and procedural guidance around sharing information about the match. The agreement states:

"As a volunteer Big Brother or Big Sister, I understand that personal information about the Little I am matched with, and/or his/her family, should be held in confidence. I understand that this confidentiality policy does not include my case manager or others on the Big Brothers Big Sisters agency staff who I might speak with regarding any circumstances of my match. Information that I share with people I know will be limited to information about the types of activities that my Little and I do together and will not reveal personal information that my Little shares with me. When speaking to people I know about my Little, I will only use his/her first name and will not identify where my Little lives."

The confidentiality agreement goes on to discuss policies and procedures around reporting abuse and neglect. BBBS of Puget Sound has found that confidentiality is a critical component to building positive relationships. If a Big discloses private information about a Little, the Little may become hesitant to share further personal information and may pull away from the relationship. Furthermore, disclosing information about a young person's identity may leave him or her vulnerable to harassment or abuse at school and at home. The confidentiality agreement is meant to prevent mentors from doing harm by disclosing personal information.

BBBS of Puget Sound is getting ready to undergo another revision of these policies and procedures to ensure they are as inclusive as possible. The revised material will include anti-bullying policies and specify that program participants should maintain confidentiality in the event that a young person comes out. These updates will be made in collaboration with LGBTQ youth and mentors who participate in the program.



Staff Development and Training

Once a program has assessed its existing level of knowledge and expertise related to serving LGBTQ youth, they should develop a plan for further stakeholder training (staff, board, etc.) and ongoing professional development. An organization may discover that some of its staff members are already quite knowledgeable on ways to help LGBTQ youth and are willing to help train others. It may also find a lack of internal knowledge and decide to partner with a local organization to facilitate initial and ongoing training. Regardless of where a program starts, ongoing professional development will be needed to ensure that the program reflects current thinking and practices in a cultural landscape that is changing constantly.

Each program will have specific needs based on its goals, but all programs should address two key topics, both of which are explained in much more detail in the “Training” section on page 51:

- **Information about LGBTQ youth and their experiences.** A solid understanding of the demographics, definitions, intersectionality, and risk and protective factors of LGBTQ youth will go a long way toward supporting inclusivity in day-to-day services. This training should cover the types of challenges LGBTQ youth face in their everyday environments, including school and home, as well as theoretical frameworks that can help clarify what types of support are needed (e.g., trauma-informed care). This training, however, should also make it clear that each LGBTQ young person

will likely present a unique blend of strengths, challenges, and life experiences and that staff and mentors must not view all LGBTQ youth through the same “higher risk” lens. Some LGBTQ youth may be navigating the choppy waters of adolescence quite well, while others may be facing myriad challenges. Some research⁴ suggests that when adults place an overemphasis on risk, they may inadvertently increase feelings of stigma for LGBTQ youth by labeling them as inherently risky or as victims.

- **Strategies and skills for working effectively with LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors and other adults.** There are some general skills, actions, and understandings that can help all program staff better support LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors and parents/guardians. A good starting point in this training is an exploration of staff members’ individual biases and comfort in working with LGBTQ individuals and how those biases might lead to challenges in their work or misunderstandings that could be harmful to participants or the program.

Another key training topic, for both mentors and staff, is the barriers that LGBTQ youth can face in forming close bonds with their mentors or other caring adults in the program. There is a strong thread in the literature on mentoring higher risk youth that details the challenges that youth who have experienced trauma or unhealthy relationships can have in building trust and opening up to new adults placed in a helping role. This is often perceived by mentors and staff as disinterest in



the relationship, or perhaps the youth not really needing a mentor (e.g., see the seminal [Role of Risk](#) study⁵). Research on the mentoring relationships of LGBTQQ youth specifically has also emphasized that the initial trust-building process may be slow and that youth may frequently test their mentors to see how they react to certain conversations or scenarios, which may lead to misunderstandings or even a rejection of the potential mentor.⁶ When staff and mentors are aware that the relationship-building process may take some time and have some ups and downs, the opportunities for misunderstandings and mentor withdrawal may be reduced.

Staff and mentors will benefit from training that helps them better understand the coming out process and the role that outness plays in different settings of a youth’s life.

Many LGBTQQ youth in earlier phases of identity development may feel different and “other” but do not self-identify as part of the LGBTQ community. Other young people, especially those further along in their identity development, may start to disclose more about their sexual orientation or gender identity with people in their lives—often starting with close friends that they trust. Coming out is not a one-time event. It occurs again and again throughout the course of one’s lifetime. Each indi-

vidual makes very personal choices about whether they can or want to be out and many times this will be situational—being out in some settings but not others due to concerns about safety, well-being, and rejection.

Whether or not a child labels themselves as LGBTQQ affects many interactions with program staff, including how information is gathered during the intake process and which external supports the youth is referred to based on how their identity is impacting their life and relationships with others. It is important to remember that a youth may not label themselves as LGBTQQ until later in their identity development.

It is also important to note that the risks and opportunities related to being out—a youth’s level of “outness”—are unique to each LGBTQQ youth. Research has shown that a youth being out in all areas of their life may experience increased incidents of harassment and victimization (particularly in schools and for youth in rural areas), but they may also gain resiliency and strength, leading to higher self-esteem and lowered depression. Youth who choose to be out in only certain parts of their lives—e.g., sharing their identity with friends but not parents/guardians—appear to face more tension and anxiety than their more open peers. The more staff can learn about outness and how to support youth no matter where they are in their identity development, the better positioned they will be to meet the needs of the young person and to work with the mentor to offer meaningful support.



PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

One final training topic to note is the concept of countertransference, which describes the process of, in this instance, an LGBTQ adult “projecting” their own experience of growing up LGBTQ or their journey of coming out onto a younger person who is just now going through these experiences themselves. While this form of lived experience can be invaluable in giving youth credible advice and deeper insights into their experiences and paths forward, there is also a risk that the adult will have their view of the young person clouded by the lens of their own experiences or push the mentee to respond to the challenges the way they might have, whether that is in the best interest of the youth or not. Training that touches on countertransference will help both staff and mentors set and respect some boundaries and take a self-determination mindset into their work with a young person.

These and other training topics are covered much more extensively in the “Training” section, where we address more complicated topics, as well as some training delivery concepts that can support this work (see page 51).

Community Partnerships and Advocacy

There are several compelling reasons to partner with local, regional, and national LGBTQ organizations—advocacy groups, Gender and Sexualities Alliances (GSAs), youth outreach centers, etc.—that can enhance what a youth mentoring program is able to offer young people and their mentors.

- Recruitment of LGBTQ mentors and LGBTQQ mentees.

- Opportunities for matches to participate in LGBTQ community events and national campaigns.
- Content expertise to support staff development and mentor training and provide additional information and learning opportunities to mentees.
- Creation or expansion of cross-program youth groups, including the formation of GSAs in new spaces and contexts.
- A referral network of other service providers and groups for when youth and their families have needs beyond what the mentoring program can provide.

Mentoring programs can think about what they offer that complements the work of other service providers. Depending on a young person’s needs, mentors may be uniquely positioned to serve as the “connective tissue” that helps keep them engaged in critical educational, clinical, or vocational supports and making sure they maximize and add to the “web of support” that keeps them on a path to long-term success. Building connections that lead to other caring peer and adult relationships is an action noted in the research literature as being particularly valuable to LGBTQQ youth.

Two examples of how local programs have partnered with local LGBTQ organizations to strengthen their capacity are presented in the profiles that follow on the work of BBBS Services, Inc. of Richmond and BBBS of Middle Tennessee.



Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc. (Richmond, VA), approaches their work mentoring LGBTQ youth with a growth mind-set. The agency recognizes that mentoring LGBTQ youth with intentionality requires subject matter expertise, so they have developed partnerships with local organizations that specialize in serving the LGBTQ community and can provide that support. One valuable partner is [Side by Side](#), an organization dedicated to creating supportive communities for Virginia's LGBTQ youth. Side by Side helps to ensure that BBBS Services, Inc.'s policies and procedures, trainings, recruitment strategies, and overall program practices foster an environment where all young people feel supported, safe, and affirmed in their identities.

BBBS Services, Inc., launched their partnership by inviting Side by Side to attend a staff meeting, where staff could be vulnerable and honest in discussing their current framework for mentoring LGBTQ youth and how they hoped to improve their practices. After this session, Side by Side developed both staff trainings and mentor trainings that focused on how to create inclusive cultures. Trainings reviewed inclusivity language, confidentiality, additional services that exist in the community, and how to navigate a young person's coming out process. The trainings were important educational experiences for staff and mentors alike, some of whom were older community members who had not previously volunteered directly with youth and were not aware of today's SOGIE landscape. One Enrollment Specialist, who moved into the mentoring space as a second career after working in the tobacco industry, is now able to effectively communicate with parents/guardians about their child being transgender and the different local services that exist.

Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., has also benefitted from Side by Side's connections in the community. Over the years, Side by Side has curated a comprehensive list of local resources and services that support the LGBTQ community, which they have shared with Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc. Program staff and Bigs are now better equipped to provide Littles and their families with knowledgeable referrals to local professionals, including counselors who specialize in working with LGBTQ youth, a local PFLAG chapter, and youth support groups. Side by Side hosts their own groups for LGBTQ youth, which some Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., Littles attend.

Another emerging partnership opportunity for Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., and Side by Side is mentor recruitment. In the summer of 2018, the two organizations partnered with local companies to facilitate recruitment events together for the first time. Side by Side has built valuable relationships with local companies, many of which have employee resource groups for LGBTQ employees. Since Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., and Side by Side offer different types of volunteer engagements (Big Brothers Big Sisters Services, Inc., looks for long-term, consistent Bigs, while Side by Side recruits short-term volunteers), the two organizations will join the employee resource groups to describe their volunteer opportunities and recruit members from the LGBTQ community.



Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee

Effectively serving LGBTQ youth requires intentional planning and thoughtful reflection, and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee has found that engaging local experts can have a significant impact on how this work is conceptualized and implemented. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee is located in Nashville, Tennessee, near Vanderbilt University and the University's Office of LGBTQI Initiatives, which works with local organizations to raise awareness about LGBTQ issues and facilitates trainings on how to effectively serve the LGBTQ community. Recognizing that they were early in their development of intentionally serving LGBTQ youth, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee reached out to the Office of LGBTQI Initiatives at Vanderbilt to explore partnership opportunities.

The Office of LGBTQI Initiatives has been a valuable thought partner in assessing how the agency is currently serving LGBTQ youth and how it can be more effective in serving this population. The partnership has supported the "organizational coming out process," during which Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee has articulated and communicated its commitment to serving LGBTQ youth with stakeholders and begun reflecting on how to build a more inclusive organizational culture. Though this honest reflection can be difficult, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Middle Tennessee has approached the process with a mind-set of continual improvement, learning, and growth.

The Office of LGBTQI Initiatives has facilitated separate trainings for staff and mentors that focus on how adults can be effective allies and create a space where youth are empowered to be brave in their identities. The trainings review basic definitions, the bias and adversity that the LGBTQ community faces, and what it means to be a sexual minority. Participants explore how to use that knowledge to create an openness with young people and receive Littles in an affirming and supportive presence. The Office of LGBTQI Initiatives has also worked with staff on understanding their own privilege and implicit biases, and how those can influence their work with Bigs and Littles.

Program Improvement Processes

Soliciting and listening to the voices of LGBTQ participants is an important process that can highlight issues previously unseen to program staff, as well as provide valuable information that can lead to program improvements. But this need not be a one-time activity. Programs are encouraged to periodically reach out to LGBTQ youth and their parents/guardians, as well as LGBTQ mentors and allies, to get feedback on an ongoing basis.

Specifically, these groups can be helpful in two areas for periodic review:

- **Gauging perceptions of safety and inclusion in the program.** LGBTQ participants may perceive the program, its staff, its events, and its communi-

cations differently than those staff or participants who do not identify as LGBTQ, and it is important to ensure they feel empowered to share these perceptions, which may help increase safety and inclusion.

- **Reviewing policies, procedures, and public-facing materials.** Many mentoring programs update or review their policies and other program documentation on an annual or other regular basis. This process should include a review by LGBTQ participants to solicit their suggestions for improvements, particularly on the messages that are conveyed to the broader world through the program's website, recruitment language, and print materials, such as application forms or FAQ handouts.



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As with many of the recommendations in this section, the intentionality of making sure such reviews are done, and that these diverse perspectives are heard and acknowledged, is a matter of conscious effort more than anything. Programs are well served to formalize this review process and to actively court LGBTQ participants to serve in this role when the time comes. Organizations such as the Forum for Youth Investment offer a wealth of resources (such as their [Building Effective Youth Councils](#) guide¹⁰) that can help programs determine how and when to incorporate youth voices. Another good resource for mentoring programs is *Critical Mentoring: A Practical Guide*¹¹, which offers extensive advice about how to follow the lead of youth in designing services that are responsive to the needs of marginalized communities, including LGBTQ youth.

Physical Space

Physical space not only concerns what is on walls, but also what happens behind them. For several years, some parts of the country have been engaged in a stigmatizing political debate about what constitutes ethical and appropriate access to bathrooms and other gender-specific public facilities. This is a debate that mentoring programs can easily avoid while making all feel welcome in their buildings. Mentoring programs should make sure that they have facilities that can be accessed by all participants regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Offering gender-neutral bathrooms and changing facilities is one of the simplest solutions to many of these concerns, but all aspects of facilities should be reviewed to see if they are welcoming or

offer any safety risks. Although originally written for public school settings, the [Transgender and Gender-Nonconforming Policy Guidance](#) resource¹² by the District of Columbia school district offers some tips for ensuring that facilities and other program infrastructure are supportive of LGBTQ youth.

Signals of Inclusivity and Online Presence

This set of recommendations is placed last in this section to connote that programs cannot effectively embrace and serve LGBTQ youth and LGBTQ mentors in their work by simply putting up some visual cues. Inclusive and responsive services are felt deeply by participants, and cosmetic changes to a program's website, talking points, or office walls is unlikely to convey that sense of belonging if that is the extent of the change. Programs should view improvements to their office environment and online presence as somewhat of an advanced step in this process, not an end unto itself.

That being said, visually signaling that the program is a welcoming and safe one is extremely important. Research suggests that even small gestures like "Safe Zone" posters can have a huge impact on how LGBTQ youth view adults around them and who they identify as potential mentors or supports.¹³ Studies of school climate¹⁴ have found many positive benefits (e.g., greater sense of belonging, feeling safer) to youth from visual and other nonverbal signals that the environment they are in is safe and respectful and that any negative experiences will be addressed. These benefits certainly extend to other spaces where adult-youth and youth-youth interactions take place, such as mentoring programs.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT

As noted previously, asking LGBTQ participants for their perspectives on how elements like website language can be improved is an excellent starting point.

A good example of how to offer some visual representations of program inclusiveness can be found in the side bar about BBBS of Santa Cruz County.

EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County**

Websites often provide volunteers, young people, and parents/guardians/families with their first impression of an organization, so Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County believes it is important that its website reflects the organization's and community's values, goals, and priorities. One of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County's priorities is creating a welcoming and inclusive environment for all Bigs, Littles, and their families, which is demonstrated through their TransMentoring Program. The TransMentoring program matches young transgender people with transgender mentors who can foster a sense of belonging in general, as well as within the trans community; relate to Littles' experiences; and help navigate difficult situations and questions.

The agency updated its website in 2016 to recruit Littles and Bigs for the TransMentoring program and to signify that its program is welcoming to everyone. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County invited stakeholders, including a representative from the Queer Youth Task Force of Santa Cruz County and members of the trans community, to review the website and make recommendations for how the agency could signify its commitment to fostering an inclusive culture.

The website's homepage was updated to showcase the rainbow flag (symbolic of the LGBTQ community) and the Transgender Pride Flag. The website also contains a link to the TransMentoring program page, where individuals can learn about the program model and how to get involved. Finally, both the Big and Little applications were updated to include fields for the applicant's personal pronoun.

Since its inception, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County has had a nondiscrimination policy and has served the LGBTQ community, but intentionally updating the program material with these symbols emphasized its commitment to inclusion. The flags encouraged families, volunteers, donors, and young people to participate in the program when they may have previously questioned whether they would be welcomed. These changes were free of cost and took little time, yet they made a powerful statement that all young people and adults belong in the program. To learn more and view the program's website, visit www.santa-cruzmentor.org.



PROGRAM DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT REFERENCES

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⁸ Center for Promise (2015). *Don't quit on me: What young people who left school say about the power of relationships*. Washington, DC: America's Promise Alliance.

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¹⁰ Martin, S., Pittman, K., Ferber, T., McMahon, A. (2007). *Building effective youth councils: A practical guide to engaging youth in policy making*. Washington, DC: The Forum for Youth Investment.

¹¹ Weiston-Serdan, T. (2017). *Critical mentoring: A practical guide*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.

¹² Office of Youth Engagement. (2015). *Transgender and gender-nonconforming policy guidance*. Washington, DC: District of Columbia Public Schools.

¹³ Mulcahy et al., 2016.

¹⁴ Kosciw et al., 2012.



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B.1.3 Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program offers a written mentor volunteer “job” description that is inclusive of knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with being an ally/advocate to diverse populations of youth, including LGBTQQ youth, as well as noting that the program is committed to serving these youth and enforcing nondiscrimination laws or policies.
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program engages in volunteer outreach to LGBTQ community groups, including corporate affinity groups, community centers, and places of faith.
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program engages in targeted outreach to LGBTQ adults who may bring valuable lived experience to the mentoring role when matched with LGBTQQ youth.
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program uses inclusive and welcoming language for mentors on their website, in recruitment brochures, and in other marketing materials.

Mentee Recruitment

B.1.6 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Written mentee roles and responsibilities are inclusive of participation in a program that values young people from all backgrounds, including LGBTQQ youth.

B.1.7 Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program uses inclusive and welcoming language for mentees on their website, in recruitment brochures, and in other marketing materials.

LGBTQ Enhancement: Program uses defined outreach strategies to LGBTQQ youth-serving organizations to recruit mentees.

Justification

The fourth edition of *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*[™] offers general guidance for recruitment actions that mentoring programs should take to locate and secure mentors and mentees that most closely align with stated program values and services. Guidance presented in this chapter offers justification for additional outreach activities that can be used to affirm and welcome the participation of LGBTQQ youth, LGBTQ adults, and allies.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INCLUSIVE, AFFIRMING, AND WELCOMING MESSAGING AND OUTREACH

Given the risks and struggles experienced by many LGBTQQ youth, agencies hold an ethical and professional responsibility to ensure the safety of their services before conducting outreach to the LGBTQ community. Making sure all staff have been trained and are culturally competent, reviewing and updating policies, and understanding referrals and resources of importance to the LGBTQ community are just some of the steps needed to make sure that no additional harm comes to young people in a mentoring agency’s



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care. Once mentoring programs have done the necessary internal work, they can then begin to communicate more broadly that they are welcoming, safe, inclusive, and prepared to offer services to the LGBTQ community.

FOR MENTORS

Inclusive messaging helps to dispel concerns that potential LGBTQ mentors might have about volunteering with a mentoring program. Historical discrimination of the LGBTQ community and the lack of national workplace protections for LGBTQ people leave many to question whether they are truly welcome as mentors. Importantly, many mentoring and youth serving programs recently possessed policies which explicitly excluded LGBTQ adults from serving as mentors or otherwise participating in the program.

In addition, with a few exceptions for state workers and those living under protections from local ordinances, LGBTQ people can still be fired due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the majority of states (as of August 2018): Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia.¹ In fact, 16 states recently petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to be able retain current laws that would allow discrimination of LGBT employees.² Given ongoing patterns of discrimination and fears of how personal information will be used, many LGBTQ individuals have valid concerns about whether or not they can

trust a mentoring program's request for volunteers. Unless otherwise specified, the default assumption held by many LGBTQ volunteers is that they are not welcome and will be rejected.

Because of these fears, mentoring programs must specifically signal to the LGBTQ community that they belong, are needed, and can play a valued role that makes a difference in a child's life. Messaging—such as prominently displayed nondiscrimination policies, affirmation statements of inclusion of the LGBTQ community, and visual cues such as the rainbow flag and the trans pride flag (see case study example of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Santa Cruz County, page 38)—helps dispel potential fears of rejection and gives LGBTQ volunteers clear signs that they, too, will be welcome and valued as mentors.

In addition, messaging that intentionally affirms LGBTQ participation in a mentoring program can also alert community members who are not supportive of LGBTQ youth that they should self-select not to apply as volunteers. Signaling to prospective volunteers that transphobic, biphobic, and homophobic beliefs are not shared by the organization offer additional levels of protection for LGBTQ youth who could be harmed by their presence in the program.

FOR YOUTH

Inclusive and affirming messaging is also important for LGBTQ youth looking to access support from mentoring relationships. For example, many LGBTQ youth served by mentoring programs may still be in earlier phases of exploring their identity and may not have disclosed their sexual orientation and/or gender



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identity to others, including their parents, before being matched. For these young people, such cues give them an important first sign that they will be in a safe place to be who they are at a time when they may feel most isolated and alone. Such messaging, along with carefully worded and inclusive intake questions, let LGBTQ youth know that they are welcome to participate and will be matched with a caring mentor.

In addition, many LGBTQ youth who are out will look for inclusive messaging before signing up as a participant in a program. Many of these young people may have already experienced victimization and bias in a number of other settings. For example, many LGBTQ youth report hearing slurs from teachers and staff at schools,³ and there is a growing body of research documenting extremely difficult situations in juvenile justice⁴ and child welfare systems⁵ for this population. Given that most LGBTQ youth are likely to have had at least one previous negative experience with an adult who was supposed to offer support, symbols of inclusion can offer a powerful reminder that there are people and services they can still rely on.

Mentor Recruitment

In general, effective recruitment strategies are designed to attract and engage target audiences whose skills and motivations best match the goals and structure of the mentoring program (Benchmark 1.3). Typically, these efforts include messaging that conveys eligibility criteria, program expectations, and realistic depictions of mentoring relationships. Given the many risks that LGBTQ youth face during adolescence, special consideration must be given—program-wide—

to which volunteers are recruited and matched with these young people.

A case example from True Colors offers a closer look at how one agency incorporated a written job description to help clearly articulate eligibility requirements and program expectations (see sidebar). Importantly, the job description at True Colors really helped to ensure that only the most committed volunteers moved forward in the process to be mentors. Such an approach limited LGBTQ youth exposure to volunteers who were not able to meet advocacy and relationship expectations.

Mentoring programs should also update eligibility criteria to include the selection of volunteers who may be uniquely able to empathize, bond with, and offer responsive support to LGBTQ youth. For example, programs may want to specifically target volunteers with lived experience as part of the LGBTQ community. Mentors who have navigated through the difficulty of understanding, sharing, and accepting their “otherness” may have a powerful part to play in the life of a young person who is also going through the same experience. Many LGBTQ mentors also want to give back to their community—especially feeling compelled to share their knowledge, insights, and resources with younger generations just beginning the lifelong process of coming out and learning more about their place in the world. Such individuals can be great role models for identity development, resilience, and strategies for overcoming stigma and bias. However, as discussed in the “Matching” section of this supplement, this should not be the sole criteria used for matching LGBTQ youth.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: True Colors

True Colors has found that setting accurate expectations for the program experience is a critical component to building thriving relationships. When True Colors' mentoring program first launched in 2005, they had a waiting list of mentees and were eager to recruit volunteers. Program staff would emphasize the positive aspects of mentoring and soften the challenges, so as not to deter much-needed mentors. Although this resulted in successful mentor recruitment, True Colors found that those early mentors and mentees were not adequately prepared for the mentoring experience, and the matches were often short.

True Colors developed written job descriptions for both mentors and mentees as a way to set accurate expectations for what the mentoring experience entails. The youth job description includes age requirements, consent to program policies, participation in the orientation session, and identification as LGBTQQ. The mentor job description has a list of nine requirements for volunteers, including age, completion of the application process, a signed confidentiality agreement, agreement to meet in-person with the mentee at least four times per month, agreement to adhere to program documentation protocols, participation in the Facebook group, attendance at group functions, agreement to serve as a mentor for at least one year, and possession of mentor traits such as a sense of humor, serving as a positive role model, and strong decision-making skills.

These job descriptions ensure that program participants understand what they are committing to and have accurate expectations for the match. Program staff also honestly describe the challenges that mentors frequently experience and the importance of consistency and unwavering support. Many LGBTQQ youth who are also systems-involved have faced abandonment because of their identity, and True Colors is diligent about preventing mentees from experiencing further rejection. These early, honest conversations and the position descriptions are designed to prevent mentees from being matched with volunteers who are not willing to overcome adversity in the mentoring relationship or cannot resolutely commit to the full program duration. Those who cannot adhere to the expectations listed in the position description cannot become mentors.

Although the position descriptions may reduce recruitment numbers, they help ensure that mentors who do sign up fully understand and agree to the program commitment. True Colors has seen a remarkable difference in the matches' longevity since the position descriptions were created. Mentors and youth are better informed about the commitment and prepared for the match, which has resulted in far fewer early match closures.

Allies—especially those allies who have LGBTQ family members and friends and/or a strong commitment to social justice for LGBTQ people—are also well positioned to serve as mentors to LGBTQ youth.

Allies can potentially offer additional perspectives of belonging and compassion to young people. Allies may also be well suited to serve as a conduit of information to family members, helping to dispel myths about LGBTQ people while also offering additional resources and advocacy to the family as a whole.

Outreach to potential volunteers who possess these shared values, backgrounds, and motivations can take different forms. Many mentoring programs will want to establish partnerships with local LGBTQ community organizations, LGBTQ-friendly churches, and LGBTQ corporate employee resource groups, and to increase their visibility during community-wide events like Pride. For example, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound's approach to outreach is to build relationships within the LGBTQ community from a variety of these sources (see sidebar).



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound**

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound actively recruits mentors from LGBTQ affinity groups at large, local corporations as a targeted approach to recruiting mentors who reflect the diversity of sexual orientation and gender identity represented in the agency's Little population. Connecting with affinity groups at large companies is a strong recruitment approach because affinity groups are often searching for opportunities to contribute to the community, both through funding or service opportunities. For organizations striving to recruit mentors with a specific interest or diversify their mentor pool to better reflect the population being served, affinity groups provide a promising opportunity to do so.

In 2017, Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound facilitated two recruitment events with Microsoft's LGBTQ employee resource group, GLEAM (Gay and Lesbian Employees at Microsoft), including a Lunch and Learn and a national webinar. Making connections with large companies can be difficult, but several members of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound's Young Professional Council work at Microsoft and were able to make the introduction. During these events, program staff presented their usual volunteer pitch, then discussed how this was an opportunity for LGBTQ volunteers to give back to the community and support youth who are LGBTQQ. Of the 15 employees who joined the Lunch and Learn, 5 became mentors.

Recruiting through affinity groups is not Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound's only innovative approach to recruitment—the agency also rents a booth during Seattle's Pride events in June to recruit both LGBTQ Bigs and Littles. Staff describe the program to those who stop by and explicitly share that the agency is welcoming to the LGBTQ community. This emphasis on inclusion is necessary. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound has found that some LGBTQ adults believe that youth-serving organizations do not perceive them as positive role models for young people. Articulating that BBBS of Puget Sound is specifically recruiting members from the LGBTQ community and is a welcoming, inclusive environment for all can dispel those misconceptions and provide adults with the encouragement needed to sign up.

Mentee Recruitment

Intersectionality is a key concept that is central to effective LGBTQ youth recruitment. Intersectionality, as a framework, notes that sexual orientation and gender identity are only two parts of a much larger self. Race, culture, and ethnicity, among many more features, are also defining ways in which a young LGBTQ person experiences the world.

Importantly, the majority of LGBTQ youth growing up today are non-White⁶ and may be exposed to differing levels of stigma, bias, and struggle based on the intersection of their backgrounds. Youth who are experiencing homophobia, poverty, and racism, for example, appear to have increased levels of risk

than their White and cisgender peers.⁷ In addition, many LGBTQ youth may also be exposed to real deficits caused by other factors in their lives, including experiences with homelessness, parent rejection, delinquency, and victimization in school. Given this diversity among LGBTQ youth, recruitment efforts of LGBTQ mentees must not only speak to sexual orientation and gender identity, but also to a young person's broader identity, background, and need for mentoring. The majority of mentoring programs are already well positioned to provide services to young people facing adversity and challenges. However, as detailed in this supplement, additional care and intention is also critically important when sponsoring relationships for LGBTQ youth.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: **Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware**

Building relationships with community organizations and partners is a cornerstone of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware’s approach to mentee recruitment. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware stays actively involved in the local community, with program staff cultivating relationships with LGBTQ youth-serving organizations and staying abreast of local issues affecting LGBTQ adults and youth. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware’s intentional approach to community engagement has helped the agency build a reputation as a valuable resource for LGBTQ youth and resulted in more mentee referrals.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware receives mentee referrals from a variety of community partners, including schools. The agency has a close partnership with the many school-based Genders & Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) in Delaware. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware recruits, screens, trains, and provides support to community volunteers who are placed at GSAs in middle and high schools across the state. Volunteers may choose to mentor in group settings during GSA sessions and/or through one-to-one matches. The agency also engages local community members by inviting guest speakers to attend GSA sessions and share their stories. Guest speakers have represented a diverse array of professions, ages, races, orientations, and identities. Some young people are inspired by this exposure to different stories and become Littles to further develop relationships with adults who can relate to their experiences.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware has developed relationships with school principals, teachers, and counselors who are aware of the program’s services and can refer youth to become Littles. Program staff attend meetings for the School-Based Health Center Community Advisory Board, which is part of Christiana Care Health System’s effort to offer wellness centers in schools. Program staff are able to connect with school-based social workers who work directly with youth and can recommend mentoring as a valuable form of support.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware also works with the local LGBTQ community outside of schools. Program staff connect with community organizations that focus on serving LGBTQ youth and their parents, such as PFLAG, youth therapeutic groups, and Parents of Trans Kids Delaware. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware has found that recruiting youth from these groups can be even more fruitful than recruiting from schools, as individuals participating in these groups have an out child (or are out themselves) and are already accessing resources to support the young person. Program staff also participate in a Facebook group for Delaware’s LGBTQ community that frequently discusses resources and services for LGBTQ adults and youth. The Facebook group has provided a platform for program staff to deepen their knowledge of external resources for Bigs and Littles, and it has enabled program staff to share information about how Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware provides youth with affirming and safe mentoring opportunities. These virtual and in-person relationships have raised the community’s awareness of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware and built the Affiliate’s reputation as a local expert in serving LGBTQ youth.

Given the role of intersectionality in the lives of LGBTQ youth, mentoring programs should explore a number of differing ways to conduct outreach and recruitment efforts.

Updates to general recruitment that use inclusive language and visible cues that welcome LGBTQ people can be important. In addition, programs may also want

to form partnerships with organizations that specifically offer services to LGBTQ youth. The example in the sidebar of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Delaware highlights how a close partnership between a mentoring program and school Genders & Sexualities Alliances (GSAs) can yield new mentoring opportunities for youth who are LGBTQ.



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B.2.1 Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program eligibility criteria ensure selected mentors do not exhibit homophobic/biphobic/transphobic behavior, especially given the potential to be matched with a youth who may not be out yet. Prospective mentors who display this behavior are screened out during the intake process or removed from the program if such behavior is discovered after the match has begun.

B.2.3 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program interview contains questions or scenario examples intended to assess compatibility in working with LGBTQ youth or surface homophobic/biphobic/transphobic beliefs.

B.2.8 Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program eligibility criteria allow for the nonacceptance of youth who exhibit homophobic/biphobic/transphobic behavior, especially in programs where youth will be interacting with one another during their time in the program. Prospective mentees who display this behavior may be screened out during the intake process if the circumstances are severe enough to warrant it, or may be removed from the program

later if such behavior is observed after the mentee has begun participating in the program.

Justification

While a program's targeted recruitment efforts can bring a good mix of potential mentors to their doors, it is really the screening process that ensures mentors are both safe and suitable for working with youth. The recommendations offered in this section can help ensure that all of the adults serving in the mentoring role, regardless of their mentee's identity, will bring healthy attitudes and beliefs about LGBTQ youth and that they can be a positive influence for all young people in the program.

This starts with making sure that the program's nondiscrimination policies and inclusive mission are reflected in mentor eligibility criteria (**Benchmark 2.1**). Essentially, any prospective mentors who exhibit homophobia or similar bigotry must be screened out of the program. Regardless of the likelihood that they would be directly matched with an out young person, they still are exhibiting attitudes (and likely subsequent behaviors) that are incompatible with the program's inclusive vision for its services. Many youth who are not out would be harmed by working with a mentor who, openly or otherwise, was critical of LGBTQ populations. Similarly, it might be harmful for these mentors to interact with other matches at group events or program-wide celebrations. Screening adults with these beliefs out of the program is likely a safer option than hoping these attitudes and beliefs do not become "an issue." Research in related fields, such as education, have cited just how

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prevalent negative views of LGBTQ youth can be among adults—and the harm they can do in their institutions. One study found that 56 percent of students reported hearing *homophobic remarks from teachers and other school staff* in the last year.¹ This illustrates that even environments that are supposed to be supportive of young people can become incredibly harmful for some youth when homophobia is allowed to go unchecked. Mentoring programs are encouraged to prevent adults who might cause similar damage from progressing to the matching stage.

One way of discovering a prospective mentor's negative beliefs about LGBTQ youth is to include questions and/or scenario-based examples in the mentor interview process (**Benchmark 2.3**). Programs should ensure that the interview process incorporates questions that will reveal red flags about discriminatory views.

While individuals with negative personal views of LGBTQ people may be reluctant to admit that they hold those beliefs, they may struggle to respond positively when asked about scenarios in which they would be working with an LGBTQ mentee such as:

- How would they feel about being matched with an LGBTQ youth?
- How would they respond if their mentee came out to them?
- How might they react if their mentee was acting in a homophobic or bigoted manor toward other youth in a group activity?
- What would they say if their mentee used homophobic language during a conversation?
- What might they say to their mentee if they found out they were physically assaulted at school because of their sexual orientation or gender identity/expression?
- How would they feel about working with same-sex parents or guardians of their mentee?

While many potential mentors might struggle to give a perfect, nuanced answer on the spot to these scenarios, those who hold truly negative views of LGBTQ people might have difficulty articulating reasonable, empathetic answers. Staff can then ask follow-up questions to discover if there are, in fact, deeply held attitudes that would disqualify that individual from the program.

A good example of an interview process that not only exposes negative biases but also supports efforts of inclusivity and being welcoming of the LGBTQ community is provided here from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound leverages the volunteer interview as an opportunity to assess whether a prospective mentor could foster a safe and affirming environment for youth of all identities. Staff begin the interview with all parties stating their pronouns and use inclusive language throughout (“Are you married or in a committed partnership?” rather than “Do you have a husband or wife?”). This allows space for prospective mentors to introduce their own identities and prevents staff from making assumptions that result in mentors feeling marginalized.

During the interview, a staff member asks the prospective volunteer a series of questions regarding identity and who the mentor would be comfortable working with. These questions are presented alongside other questions about identity, such as race and religion.

Questions include:

- 1) How do you identify in terms of sexual orientation?
- 2) Would you be comfortable working with a Little or family members who may have a sexual orientation different than your own? (Why or why not?)
- 3) Would you be comfortable working with a family or Little who identifies as a different gender/gender fluid?

The volunteer’s responses help inform the matching process, but they are also used as a method of screening. Some prospective volunteers have responded to these questions with homophobic or transphobic comments that clearly demonstrated the volunteer would not support LGBTQ youth (“I would tell a young person that if he were born a boy, he’s a boy”). These mentors are screened out of the program. Many other responses are more nuanced (“I am uneducated about LGBTQ identities and currently do not feel equipped to support an LGBTQ youth”). If Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound staff note any potential red flags or are uncomfortable with certain responses, they meet with their colleagues to debrief and decide whether this person would be supportive to youth of all identities. If the team decides a prospective mentor could not support an LGBTQ youth, that person does not move forward to the matching process.

While not listed as a formal recommendation here, the reference check process **(B.2.5)** is another opportunity to assess how mentors feel about LGBTQ youth. Friends and family of the individual might be more willing, when asked, to indicate that a prospective mentor would struggle to work with an LGBTQ youth or that they hold views that are incompatible with the program’s commitment to inclusiveness.

It can be difficult for programs to reject prospective mentors. Certainly, many programs over the years

have allowed mentors with bigoted views to serve youth, hoping that those views never come up or become a problem. But the potential for harm that results from that approach stands in contrast to the ethical principles argued for in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* noted earlier in this supplement. Mentoring a child is a privilege, not an inherent right. Mentoring programs must be safe for all youth. This means accepting only those adults who have the heart, the empathy, and the morality to work with the full spectrum of young people enrolled in the program.



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Mentee Screening

Young people themselves may also exhibit homophobic/biphobic/transphobic behavior, and this situation can be just as challenging as when mentors or prospective mentors display that behavior. Research indicates that many young people express homophobic and similarly bigoted remarks to their peers on a regular basis.² The good news is that these types of remarks have been declining in school settings for over a decade (except for negative remarks about gender expression, which seem to be holding steady).³ A mentoring program can expect that many of the youth who come through their door will at least make occasional remarks around their peers that qualify as homophobic/biphobic/transphobic. This may not mean that they harbor beliefs at a deep level about their LGBTQ peers—some of this may be unfortunate youth slang—but some youth may embrace those negative beliefs.

Mentoring programs will need to think carefully about how to handle situations in which a mentee has expressed negative views or used offensive or noninclusive language during the intake process. While the program must prioritize safety and inclusiveness for all, the reality is that the mentoring program might be a great opportunity for the young person in question to be exposed to LGBTQ peers and healthier group interactions that can improve their views and behaviors related to the LGBTQ community. A mentor might be a credible messenger who can redirect homophobic behaviors and

enlighten youth as to the damaging effects their words can have.

On the other hand, and especially in group mentoring programs, allowing homophobic or similarly bigoted youth to harm others in the program may recreate the negative environment LGBTQ youth commonly find elsewhere. Programs are encouraged to reach out to parents or others when they learn that youth are using language or expressing views that are not compatible with the values of the program. These youth may be screened out if it seems that the issues are beyond what the program might be able to positively address and that the safety and well-being of other participants would be compromised. But programs are also encouraged to be careful about rejecting otherwise eligible young people from the program as their services may be a critical opportunity to educate and reverse a developing mind away from hate and ignorance. As with mentors, it may be helpful to differentiate between those attitudes or behaviors that are automatic disqualifiers (**B.2.8**) and those that may simply warrant discussion and clarification of behavioral and language expectations in the program.

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²Kosciw et al., 2016.

³Kosciw et al., 2016.



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Mentor Training

B.3.2 Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics (see *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* for full listing of training topics):

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** When applicable and appropriate, prospective mentors are trained, ideally pre-match but early in their experience at the very least, on key information related to LGBTQ experiences:
 - Definitions related to sexual orientation (e.g., gay, lesbian, bisexual, asexual, pansexual, etc.).
 - Definitions related to gender identity/expression (e.g., transgender, genderqueer, nonbinary, etc.).
 - Demographics of LGBTQ youth, including the estimated numbers of LGBTQ at the national or state and local levels.
 - Risk factors for LGBTQ youth at home and at school/in the community, including research that documents heightened experiences with homelessness, juvenile justice involvement, victimization, and bullying, as well as deficits in accessing developmental assets often associated with growing into a healthy adulthood.
 - The intersectionality of LGBTQ youth with race, ethnicity, poverty, geography, and other demographic characteristics, as well as how intersectionality can magnify youth risk factors.
 - Common sexual behaviors among youth and youth attitudes about sex and identity (including LGBTQ youth) and how these behaviors and attitudes may differ based on generation.
- Resiliency and protective factors for LGBTQ youth.
- Other relevant theories and research applicable to serving LGBTQ youth, such as processes of healthy identity development, the importance of creating a safe and affirming program climate, and/or principles of trauma-informed care.
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Prospective (and current, if needed) mentors of LGBTQ youth are further trained, ideally pre-match, on key skills and perspectives that will allow them to effectively mentor LGBTQ youth, including:
 - The importance of getting to know each mentee and their unique strengths, challenges, and areas for potential growth and not assuming that their LGBTQ status is inherently determinative of any level of risk or specific negative behaviors or experiences.
 - Barriers to trust that LGBTQ youth may face when participating in mentoring relationships.
 - Exploring their own biases (conscious or unconscious), their attitudes, and their levels of comfort regarding serving LGBTQ individuals and how to recognize when these factors can lead to negative interactions, even unintentionally.
 - Understanding the coming out process for LGBTQ youth, including uniquely experienced developmental milestones for understanding, accepting, and sharing an LGBTQ identity, handling sudden disclosures, understanding youth choices and concerns related to being out and how to



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provide support over time during critical moments and changes in identity and expression.

- Avoiding countertransference of one’s own experiences as an LGBTQQ youth or young adult onto the mentee.
- Managing known information about out status of mentees, which should be articulated in the program’s confidentiality policy. These policies should ideally respect mentees’ desires around confidentiality and disclosure of information. This can be especially critical for youth whose parents or guardians might not be receptive to changes in their status and for youth who may not be out in all parts of their lives.
- Responding nonjudgmentally and with empathy to mentee disclosures about risky or unhealthy behaviors (e.g., sex practices, substance abuse, skipping school, etc.) and engaging in meaningful discussions about such behaviors.
- Skills for working effectively day-to-day with LGBTQQ youth and adults, such as respectful use of personal pronouns and affirming language to use with parents/guardians of LGBTQQ youth.
- Awareness of how the intersecting identities of LGBTQQ youth (e.g., race, ethnicity, religion) impact their individual experiences and the support they will, in turn, need from their mentors and the program as a whole.
- Boundary setting and other relationship skills that can prevent misunderstandings (e.g., not shaming a young person for having same-sex

romantic feelings; helping to channel mentor/mentee boundary setting conversations into strategies to help the mentee identify traits and characteristics of healthy, age-appropriate, and respectful relationships).

- Handling circumstances where parents or guardians of LGBTQQ youth express negative reactions to their child’s sexual orientation or gender identity/expression (or changes or disclosures that happen during their time in the program).
- Local referral resources for the health, safety, and well-being of diverse groups of LGBTQQ youth.

(new) LGBTQ Enhancement: Mentor training, ideally pre-match, utilizes role-playing exercises and other training techniques that allow mentors to practice positive, nonjudgmental responses to sudden disclosures about the youth’s identity, behaviors, or challenges (e.g., coming out to the mentor, revealing drug use, reporting victimization, etc.). This training should also reinforce information learned about confidentiality policies and respecting youth preferences around disclosure of information.

Justification

In general, pre-match training should provide tools, resources, and guidance to build mentor confidence and self-efficacy. Pre-match training often clarifies program and relationship expectations, gives concrete “how to” examples, and provides useful resources for volunteers to build and sustain high-quality



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ity relationships with their mentees. Importantly, a central goal of such training is to familiarize mentors with the experiences, needs, and backgrounds of all young people served by the agency—which also includes youth who are LGBTQQ.

At a minimum, effective pre-match training activities must begin with adherence to all training benchmarks described in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, 4th edition. In this supplement, we recommend additional training content that can help bring empathy, advocacy, skill development, and resource awareness to volunteers who will be building relationships with LGBTQQ youth. This section parallels training guidance for staff described at the start of this supplemental resource (see page 22).

PROVIDE MENTORS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT LGBTQQ YOUTH

As a starting point, all volunteers should be trained to understand the extent and range of diversity within the LGBTQ community as well as key concepts, definitions, and terminology for sexual and gender minority youth. Knowledge of these fundamentals can later be used to bring individualized, responsive, and youth-centered approaches to mentoring relationships.

LGBTQ people are often grouped together due to shared experiences with marginalization, stigma, and societal bias. However, there are also critical differences within this community. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual youth, for example, have defining experiences uniquely rooted in attraction, sexual identity, and sexual orientation. Transgender

youth, in comparison, tend to have developmental experiences that speak more to the journey and milestones associated with gender identity. Mentors, program staff, and others working with this population must be able to recognize and respond to specific and unique differences among subgroups of LGBTQQ youth—especially given the required social, emotional, and informational support that may be needed by each individual young person.

Mentors matched with gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, for example, would likely benefit from learning more about the coming out process and phases of sexual minority identity development.

In these matches, the mentor could benefit from knowledge of milestones that are associated with coming out, including average ages for “feeling different,” “self-labeling” as gay or lesbian, and disclosing for the first time—all of which are likely to occur during the time when most mentoring services are provided. Mentors should also be able to recognize that coming out is something that happens across a lifetime and that daily and situational decisions of outness will likely be made by their mentees—often as a result of safety concerns, feelings of vulnerability, and/or fears of being rejected. Understanding this unique developmental experience—and its implications and tensions—can help volunteers better understand motivations behind mentee actions and behaviors. In addition, such awareness can help volunteers recognize the importance of confidentiality



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regarding disclosures and its role in establishing and maintaining trust in the relationship.

Mentors matched with transgender youth should receive information about experiences and milestones that often occur during gender identity formation and gender consolidation (the process of melding one's various identities and "selves" into a coherent, healthy view of self). Mentors should understand the difference between sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, and gender perception. In addition, mentors may also have questions about social, emotional, legal, and medical transitions that may be of importance to youth in their care—even if such transitions may not occur during the relationship, or ever for the youth. Lastly, mentors should be given insight into the importance of honoring their mentees by using the mentee's personal pronoun and chosen name. Such information can help volunteers become familiar with key milestones, challenges, and experiences that could happen during the match.

Agencies looking for an easy-to-understand visual depiction of differences between sexual orientation and gender identity may want to consider using either the "[Gender Unicorn](#)" or the "[Gender Bread Person](#)" as a training resource for their mentors. Further, a growing body of online materials is available from the [Human Rights Campaign](#), [Gender Spectrum](#), [GSA Network](#), and the other LGBTQ working group members that contributed to the development of this guide.

Research on the lived experiences of LGBTQ youth is another critical component of pre-match training.

For example, previewing research on such things as school bullying,¹ homelessness,² parent and family rejection,³ juvenile justice⁴ and child welfare system involvement,⁵ depression,⁶ suicidal ideation,⁷ and risk-taking behavior⁸ can help mentors begin to identify potential areas in which their mentees may be struggling and to identify behaviors they can take to offer protection and support.

This intersectionality is another important area to cover during pre-match training. Every person holds intersecting lenses through which they view the world and are viewed by the world. LGBTQ youth experience their adolescence, in part, based on their sexual orientation and gender identity.

In addition, LGBTQ youth also engage in their day-to-day through other, very personal touchpoints. These include experiences based on race, class, ethnicity, culture, family support, geographic location, and spirituality. Such intersections are seen to potentially magnify existing risks or offer pathways toward resilience.

The strongest mentoring relationships span across intersections of a child's background, giving mentors multiple entry points to connect.

In addition, mentors that are most aware of the risks and opportunities found in each part of a child's life appear best positioned to attune to these circumstances and offer personalized emotional, informational, and advocacy routes of support that the young person can take toward growing into a positive and healthy adult.



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REVIEW STRATEGIES FOR VOLUNTEERS TO EFFECTIVELY BUILD AND SUSTAIN RELATIONSHIPS WITH LGBTQQ YOUTH

Given the importance of empathy in high-quality mentoring relationships, pre-match training should offer time for mentors working with LGBTQQ youth to reflect on their own experiences with bias, “otherness,” and difference. Many mentors—like many LGBTQQ youth—have felt different or like an outsider at some point in their lives. They may have experienced rejection, loss, and trauma. Cultivating an awareness of such feelings—and helping volunteers recognize their importance in working with young people from different backgrounds—offers critical personal insights for volunteers matched with LGBTQQ youth (and those who have experienced marginalization based on difference). Visualization activities that help volunteers think through how they felt during a time when they did not fit in may be a helpful starting point. Such activities can help volunteers to become more aware of feelings, behaviors, and experiences that are often part of the landscape for many LGBTQQ youth.

Mentors can also benefit from activities that help them to personalize the coming out experience. For example, an activity called “[Coming Out Stars](#)” offers a simulated look at the impact of coming out and being rejected by close friends, family members, and the community due to being gay or lesbian. Such an activity can be especially powerful for allies that are matched with LGBTQQ youth.

In addition to empathy and awareness building activities, pre-match training should also include content that can help familiarize mentors with steps they can

take to ensure the safety and well-being of LGBTQQ youth in their care. For example, mentors should be trained on the importance of taking a youth-centered approach in their relationship. This type of approach focuses on the developmental needs of the child, especially regarding identity. For example, a mentor who suspects that their mentee is LGBTQQ should never force their mentee to come out. When an individual is forced to disclose feelings they may not be ready to share, there is the potential for psychological distress and tension. Instead, mentors should be encouraged to establish an inclusive and safe space and tone within their relationship—letting LGBTQQ youth know that they will be respected and cared for, and that they will not face rejection when (or if) they choose to come out. A youth-centered approach also follows the young person through their coming out experience—helping to target resources, support, and advocacy that is responsive (and not presumptive) to the needs of their mentee.

Mentors should also receive clear guidance on working with parents/guardians—especially those who may not be supportive of their child’s sexual orientation and/or gender identity. [The Family Acceptance Project](#) has numerous resources that can help guide volunteers around language to use when talking to unsupportive parents/guardians. These tips include: meeting the family where they are, offering the family respectful language when talking about sexual orientation and gender identity, letting parents and caregivers share their story, and educating parents and caregivers on not just how rejecting behaviors affect their LGBTQQ child, but also on how supportive and accepting be-



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haviors can affect their LGBTQQ child. Giving mentors resources and tools to have such conversations will help them respond to or prevent one of the most notable entry points into struggle for LGBTQQ youth—parent/guardian and family rejection.

Given the scale of stigma, victimization, and challenges that many LGBTQQ youth experience, mentors working with this population may find themselves struggling when they see their mentee engage in risky behaviors. The default response for most volunteers is to try to help their mentee understand where such behaviors are coming from and to identify other, more appropriate behaviors. Mentors who are prescriptive or judgmental may find that they lose their connection with their mentees. Therefore, they should receive more intensive support from the mentoring program to advise/guide them to respectfully advocate, model, and leverage trust formed in the relationship so that their mentee knows they are cared for and understand healthier options. Similarly, mentors should also participate in additional training on setting boundaries in their relationship to ensure they are able to offer support as a caring adult instead of as a counselor. Mandatory reporting requirements must also be highlighted for both the mentor and the mentee.

UTILIZE PRE-MATCH TRAINING TECHNIQUES TO HELP BUILD MENTOR CONFIDENCE AND SELF-EFFICACY TO PRACTICE POSITIVE, NONJUDGMENTAL RESPONSES DURING CRITICAL MOMENTS

Mentors often worry about saying the “wrong” thing when they are working with LGBTQQ youth—especially in critical moments. Ideally, pre-match training should consist of opportunities for volunteers to

discuss and practice appropriate ways to respond to different scenarios involving their mentees (and how to make things right with mentees when a mentor uses wrong terminology).

Role-playing activities can be powerful tools during pre-match training—especially if they are coupled with program suggestions, how-to guides, and feedback. Such scenarios can range from helping the volunteer explore how to respond to their mentee coming out for the first time to handling more nuanced and difficult experiences such as bullying, risky behaviors, truancy, and homelessness. Each of these role-playing activities should also have staff discussions highlighting policies along with a preview of local resources that are available to help the mentor offer support.

In addition, reflection activities can be powerful ways to help mentors examine their own biases and to better understand how they can prevent transference of their own “coming out” experience onto their mentees. Giving opportunities for volunteers to talk through generational differences in coming out, as well as steps they can take to remain focused on their mentees’ individual journey, can further help create a youth-centered approach to their relationship.

[LifeWorks](#) at the Los Angeles LGBT Center offers an important case example (see sidebar) of the structure and topics of pre-match training for mentors working with LGBTQQ youth. This example includes insights into the content and strategies used by staff to increase mentor confidence and prepare them for the match.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: LifeWorks

LifeWorks required prospective mentors to attend full-day trainings before they were matched with mentees. LifeWorks conducted these trainings on Saturdays or Sundays, giving potential mentors the opportunity to demonstrate that they could make room in their lives and prioritize a young person. Trainings also served as a last step in the application and screening process. Mentors had to demonstrate that they could fully commit to attending the training and engage in activities throughout.

The training was divided into three sections: 1) programming, 2) LGBTQ youth 101, and 3) mentoring practices. The first prong of the training focused on the programming and services LifeWorks offered. The second section focused on ensuring that mentors, who were of varying ages, education levels, and professions, had a comprehensive understanding of how SOGIE looks today for youth. To make these sessions more engaging and authentic, LifeWorks incorporated videos of young people talking to adults about their sexuality and gender identity and expression. The videos served as conversation starters for how the SOGIE experience is different today and what that means for youth-adult partnerships. Program participants also discussed some of the challenges and trauma that youth are facing today by looking at statistics, including research from the Family Acceptance Project®.

The last portion of the day focused on mentoring and emphasized the importance of empathy. LifeWorks peppered several exercises that required mentors to demonstrate their level of empathy toward each other, including an exercise called “Life Maps.” The Life Map exercise requires mentors to list and highlight the successes and challenges they have faced since infancy, with an emphasis on their coming out experience. Mentors use crayons, markers, pastels, stickers, and stamps to draw a “map” of their lives and present the finished product to the group. This activity provided LifeWorks with insight into potential mentors’ ability to be vulnerable and communicate sensitive topics. If a mentor could not openly discuss their coming out process, it was an indicator that this person may not be comfortable or equipped to lead these types of conversations with a young person.

The training also included case studies and role-playing activities to prepare mentors to address challenging, real-life situations when they arose throughout the match. The capstone of the training was an activity adapted from Human Rights Campaign (HRC) called “Deer in the Headlights,” a role-playing exercise in which participants have to listen, assess, and respond to real-life situations that involve LGBTQ youth and/or the LGBTQ community. Participants assumed the actor roles of mentor and mentee. The “mentee” read a quote or situation, and the “mentor” had to apply learning concepts throughout the day and respond immediately. Topics included handling discussions related to coming out as transgender, disclosures of risky behaviors, such as drug use or unprotected sex, and suicidal thoughts, as well as responding to situations like mentees asking for money. The trainer paused the exercise as the mentor responded, so the full group could provide feedback on the mentor’s reaction, body language, and wording. When these situations arise in real life, mentors may not have time to think through their responses, yet their reactions will leave a lasting imprint on the mentee. “Deer in the Headlights” enables mentors to practice and condition themselves to respond in an affirmative and supportive manner.

The training activities were informational yet also deeply personal. Mentors were asked to relive difficult experiences and act out delicate situations. Though it could be challenging, after the training, mentors were better prepared, more informed, better equipped to address issues that may arise, and connected with a group of staff and mentors who could be called upon for support.



TRAINING REFERENCES

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MATCHING AND INITIATION

B.4.1 Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** The matching criteria considered by the staff includes parent/guardian, youth, and mentor preferences related to sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Matching policies and procedures address the potential for matching mentors and youth based on similar shared orientation and/or gender identity/expression, among other criteria (e.g., mentor’s ability to serve as an ally).

B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Because of the potentially elevated risk to LGBTQ youth from a failed or quickly terminated match, programs provide ample time during an initial introductory meeting for the mentor, mentee, and the youth’s parent or guardian to spend time together to assess the “fit” and comfort level of the potential match before formally committing to the relationship.

E.4.2 Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Given the potentially elevated risks for LGBTQ youth if they are rejected by their mentor or otherwise have a short-term,

negative mentoring experience, program allows matches some time to get to know one another in a group format for a period of time before committing to a matched one-to-one relationship.

Justification

Making the right matches between mentors and youth is one of the most important aspects of managing a mentoring program, but also one that is fraught with potential complications and unforeseen challenges.

It can be challenging to find the right “fit” between a youth and adult on paper— let alone to get parental consent and buy-in for the match, followed by arranging an initial meeting that allows the relationship to get a positive start with all participants on the same page. Making these kinds of ideal matches is both art and science and requires a lot of nuance and hard-earned expertise. Issues related to the sexual orientation and gender identity of both mentors and youth participants can further complicate this process and, if not handled properly, can leave volunteers and young people feeling rejected, or worse. The recommendations in this section are intended to help programs incorporate youth and mentor sexual orientation and gender identity and expression when considering criteria and initiating matches, while also setting the stage for those matches to get started on a positive, conflict-free note.



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Regardless of the specific strategies used to make matches, we encourage all programs to allow (in their policies and procedures) for the matching of adults and youth based on shared orientation and/or gender identity and gender expression (**Benchmark B.4.1**). While shared orientation or gender identity may not always be the most important criteria in matching a particular youth with a particular mentor, for young people who are still navigating through their coming out process having an adult mentor who has had the same developmental experiences can be highly desired. Shared life events (or milestones) can offer a range of benefits that speak to unique identity development experiences often associated with being LGBTQQ.¹

The lived experience of an LGBTQ mentor may be an invaluable asset to a young person who is in the midst of discovering who they are, especially for those youth who may be wrestling with feelings of disenfranchisement or feeling socially withdrawn, and are navigating ways to successfully integrate their identity into society (or out of social isolation). These mentors can share advice about their own coming out experiences and, through role modeling and advocacy, assist mentees to reframe negative self-talk (e.g., internalized homophobia) into language and beliefs that reflect new, and more positive ways of seeing their future.² In addition, these mentors can serve as advocates within mentees' families, helping parents/guardians and siblings visualize encouraging futures that are accessible to their mentees³ and learn more positive ways of seeing themselves within the context of the LGBTQ

community.⁴ Such mentors may also be able to attune to the changing needs of their mentees, helping, over time, to support mentees through various phases of identity development. Matching LGBTQQ youth with LGBTQ adults is especially important for adolescent mentees, who research indicates may gravitate more toward relationships with adults who they know have critical information that can help them with their specific needs. We encourage programs to allow these matches when relevant.

It is worth noting, however, that shared orientation or gender identity/expression is only one of the many criteria programs should consider when making matches. Ensuring a good fit in terms of interests and passions, compatible meeting times, mentor skills and youth areas of need, and personality traits (e.g., shared sense of humor) is similarly important. Adult allies—mentors with similar backgrounds, interests, and a commitment to the LGBTQ community—could be well-positioned to build a close relationship and serve in an advocacy role. In contrast, adults and youth who share a similar orientation, but little else, may not enjoy a successful match. We encourage programs to consider all relevant criteria when making match decisions.

Also worth noting is that some LGBTQ adults might not be a good fit to be matched with LGBTQQ youth if they are still navigating through their own coming out experiences. When working with LGBTQ mentors, program staff should ask questions related to the mentor's own journey to becoming an adult who is out and note when a mentor seems to still be wrestling with questions and the circumstances



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of their own orientation and identity. Such mentors may not be in the best position to help a young person navigate these life stages (critical moments) themselves and may potentially struggle with projecting their own circumstances onto the young person, rather than honoring where the youth is in their own coming out experience.

Lastly, agencies should ensure that matching policies and criteria are based on gender identity and not on sex assigned at birth. Many programs unintentionally limit pools of volunteers available to meet the needs of transgender children based on fears and concerns regarding cross-gender matching. These historic policies—reflecting outdated assumptions about gender—may impede the ability of the agency to provide the best possible match for a transgender mentee. Given that the vast majority of volunteers and youth identify as cisgender, expanding match criteria to focus on gender identity will likely have a minimal impact on program services.

In summary, we strongly encourage programs to allow for same gender/orientation/identity matching of adults and youth but recognize that those shared traits are only one of many important factors when considering the criteria for successful matching.

Participant Preferences

Participants, particularly parents/guardians, often indicate specific mentor preferences (criteria) that can result in challenges for program staff. Some youth, or their parents or guardians, may express preferences not to be matched with an LGBTQ mentor. Mentors may, in turn, express disappointment

at not being matched with an out youth with whom they can share advice about LGBTQ issues. Even in situations where an out youth is recommended to be matched with an LGBTQ mentor, parents and guardians may still express a desire for a different mentor, hoping that a mentor might change their child's orientation or identification. These types of situations will require more thoughtful and individualized conversations that should highlight the agency's commitment to serving the LGBTQ community. These are opportunities for program staff to engage parents/guardians in dialogues to gain more clarity and meaning, to share information about safety, screening, and the LGBTQ community, and to share the agency's policy of inclusion—which is to serve all populations, including LGBTQ youth.

Benchmark 4.2 encourages programs to arrange an initial meeting between the mentor, mentee, and the mentee's parent or guardian where they can get to know each other and express any concerns about the potential match. This is often where these types of orientation/identity/expression concerns can arise. One way of mitigating any surprises at that initial meeting is suggested in **Enhancement 4.3** of the *Elements*, which recommends sharing information about the potential match before the first meeting via phone or email so that participants are aware of and/or provided full background information about each other prior to the initial meeting.

We encourage programs to plan and schedule these initial meetings to have enough time—perhaps even a few hours in duration—to adequately frame the potential match and sort through any challenges



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that arise, regardless of what information is shared prior to the session. In this way, program staff can share vital information about why they are suggesting this match. This will also allow the mentor and youth to spend time getting to know one another—as well as allowing the same for the mentor and the parent or guardian—so that everyone involved feels comfortable. The program may want to provide an activity, such as completing and discussing life maps (see later in this section for a case study example of life maps), personality questionnaires, and/or goal-setting worksheets, to give the participants a fun and interactive way to learn about one another.

When issues related to participant sexual orientation or gender identity/expression arise, we encourage programs to use these situations as teachable moments.

For parents or caregivers with concerns about matching their child with an LGBTQ mentor, program staff can reiterate the safety-related procedures of the program, note the many other criteria that determined the suggestion of this particular match, and reiterate that they feel this LGBTQ individual will be an excellent role model and asset for their child. As discussed above, it can be helpful to get clarity from the parent/guardian about their concerns—in many instances, some areas of uncertainty can be clarified by providing more rationale and reiterating all the steps the staff perform to

make the match decisions and to ensure the safety of all involved.

For LGBTQ mentors who were eager to mentor a youth whose LGBTQQ journey reminds them of their own, program staff can reiterate that all young people in the program have needs and that mentor selection is based on the potential to respond to the unique needs of each child. In this case, the program staff can also remind the volunteer of the importance of selecting mentors based on many criteria, including shared interests, temperament, and background; and that special care is taken to ensure participants are committed to the program and potential matches have the right chemistry before creating mentoring relationships.

However, if one of the parties involved feels that this is not the right match, the program staff should honor that feedback and pursue a different match. While these incidents may be uncomfortable, it is important to remember that matches that are established against a participant's preferences are ill-positioned to succeed in the long term. Honoring the participant's voice takes precedence over other concerns.

MINIMIZING POTENTIAL REJECTION BY EASING INTO THE MATCH

Another strategy for successful matches involving LGBTQQ youth is to allow time for participants to get to know one another before progressing into the formal matching stage. One such strategy is already suggested in **Enhancement 4.2** of the current



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Elements: Hosting a “getting to know you” mixer between all the youth and adult participants in a cohort where they can interact, learn a bit about personal histories and interests, and then suggest potential matches with whom they think they might find success. Many mentoring programs find this approach to yield strong matches that have already found a bit of a “spark.”

We recommend an alternative that can minimize the rejection that LGBTQQ youth might face if a match is established too quickly and closes prematurely. This strategy may also potentially strengthen the match by grounding it in participant preference. Many programs working with LGBTQQ youth begin with a group mentoring approach—many adults and youth engaged in group activities and discussions—that can highlight similarities of personality and

common interests. These programs then allow one-to-one matches to develop after a period of time, but only when the mentor and young person feel that strong connection and request the match together. This matching strategy holds great promise not only for LGBTQQ youth, but also for programs serving other groups that may have heightened concerns over early match terminations.

To illustrate a few of these group-to-dyad approaches that can allow mentees to ease into a stronger relationship, see the case studies on the innovative approaches of JP Morgan Chase’s Fellowship Initiative and True Colors. Both represent careful, considered approaches to ensuring that youth find the right fit and level of comfort.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: The Fellowship Initiative

A mentoring relationship's success is oftentimes determined by the strength and longevity of the mentor-mentee match, so JPMorgan Chase's The Fellowship Initiative (TFI) takes special care to ensure participants, LGBTQ or otherwise, are committed to the program and potential matches have chemistry before creating mentoring relationships. TFI is an intensive three-year college and career readiness program that brings Fellows together three Saturdays a month for leadership development, academic enrichment, team building, and mentoring opportunities. Some participants realize soon after beginning the program that the commitment is too intensive for their schedules and lifestyles, and they elect to leave the program early. Program staff create matches six months into the program to identify the best possible mentor matches and ensure that only participants who are dedicated to engaging in the full program duration are matched in mentoring relationships. This matching approach creates more long-lasting relationships and diminishes the number of Fellows who feel disappointed or abandoned by a mentor who leaves the relationship early.

Creating matches six months into the program provides staff with an opportunity to better gauge participants' interests, personalities, needs, and chemistry with potential mentors. Program staff host a few opportunities throughout the first six months for Fellows and mentors to interact and assess connections. Mentors are invited to attend a community service day, where participants go into elementary schools and deliver presentations to students, as well as certain Saturday sessions with Fellows. Mentors also help judge a "soap box" competition, where Fellows each deliver a two-minute speech on a topic or issue they care about. Mentors use rubrics to score presentations and have time to socialize with Fellows following the competition. These events allow Fellows and mentors to interact with each other and contemplate their own preferences for matches. Fellows and mentors are encouraged to communicate their preferences with the TFI Director if they identify someone they'd like to be matched with.

The six-month timeframe allows program staff a longer window to build relationships with Fellows and gather information to make matches. Some Fellows are quick to open up and share their stories upon entering the program, while others take longer to reveal who they are. Over the six months, program staff learn about Fellows' personalities, family backgrounds, social and emotional needs, and academic performance. TFI strives to match Fellows with mentors who have complementary skill sets that can help Fellows succeed in college, the workforce, and beyond. If a Fellow is struggling with written and verbal communication, he may be matched with someone who has particularly strong communication skills. It is often difficult to gauge where Fellows are struggling and how they could best be supported—taking the time to develop relationships with each Fellow helps program staff with the learning process. This approach is especially promising for programs that work with young people who need more intensive support that mentors may not be equipped to provide, as it allows staff to start to address those issues before matches are made.

After six months, program staff gather to brainstorm potential matches. Staff review questionnaires filled out by Fellows and mentors that include questions about where mentors went to school, what their hobbies are, why they want to mentor, and what Fellows are looking to gain from their mentoring experience (networking opportunities, general support, career guidance, etc.). This information is combined with staff's personal knowledge of participants' personalities, family backgrounds, interests, needs, and preferences to make matches. This thoughtful and intentional approach to matching ensures that Fellows are paired with individuals who are best equipped to support them.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: True Colors

True Colors requires that all mentors start in a group mentoring setting before transitioning to a one-to-one relationship. This practice began early in True Colors' program development when the Agency had a long mentee waitlist and not enough prospective volunteers to fill the gap. True Colors still wanted to engage the young people on their waitlist in their community, so they established group mentoring opportunities that both one-to-one matches and young people on the waitlist could participate in and began recruiting a new segment of mentors who could serve a lighter commitment. Group mentors would provide young people with transportation to group mentoring events and participate in activities, with no expectation of becoming a one-to-one mentor.

As the group mentoring program progressed, relationships between young people and mentors began to develop organically over regular chats in the car or conversations during social activities. Many mentors who anticipated that they couldn't commit to a one-to-one match (a much more intensive time-commitment—one-to-one matches are in contact at least four times per month, whereas group mentors participate just once or twice a month) developed deep connections with a young person, prompting them to want to dedicate more time to the program. Mentors and young people would share their preferences with the mentoring program's Director. If the mentor and young person agreed, the group mentor could transition to a one-to-one mentor and the young person would be taken off the waitlist.

True Colors realized over time that these matches seemed to be more compatible. They cultivated relationships more quickly and these matches lasted longer than matches that did not self-select in this way. Youth and mentors could suggest their own matches based on chemistry and shared interests, some of which True Colors would not have identified through applications. Because mentors and young people had already developed positive relationships, there was little guesswork around whether the match would get along and thrive for the long term. The group mentoring experience also provided matches with a solid foundation that enabled them to establish trust and develop bonds quicker.

The practice was so successful that True Colors now requires that all mentors begin in a group setting. Mentors still provide young people with transportation to group mentoring events and socialize during the activities. Many mentors find that the more flexible and less time-intensive commitment is better aligned with their lifestyle, so they remain group mentors. Others know from the beginning that they would like to become one-to-one mentors and transition into matches after serving as a group mentor for three months. These different mentoring opportunities broaden the potential pool of volunteers and enable True Colors to engage more mentors with varying capacities, interests, and levels of availability.

MATCHING AND INITIATION REFERENCES

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MONITORING AND SUPPORT

B.5.9 Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Mentor handbook or other match support literature includes referral information to LGBTQ and LGBTQ-friendly resources and organizations.
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program considers offering in-person (or online) support groups to mentors working with LGBTQ youth so that they can share effective strategies, offer tips on overcoming specific challenges, get referrals to other community organizations, and receive and provide support for this often challenging work.
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program considers offering in-person or online discussion groups to mentors and youth on topics relevant to the LGBTQ community as a supplement to program activities or training, allowing mentors and youth to deepen their knowledge or share their perspectives on topics that arise in their relationship.
- **(new) LGBTQ Benchmark:** When appropriate, the program provides enhanced support to mentors of youth who have experienced rejection or estrangement from their family and friends, including offering strategies or tools that can help them navigate rebuilding positive family and peer connections.

E.5.2 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and/or offers information about activities that matches might wish to participate in together.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program offers group activities for LGBTQ youth (e.g., peer sharing, engaging in social justice activities).
- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program offers opportunities for LGBTQ youth to build safe and supportive peer connections while in the program (gay-straight alliance types of programming).

(new) LGBTQ Enhancement: When relevant and appropriate, program offers opportunities for mentors and mentees, either through the program or in partnership with other community organizations, to engage in leadership opportunities, community-building initiatives, and local political engagement activities.

Justification

Supporting matches as they progress over time—with ongoing training, referrals to other resources, and relationship advice and troubleshooting—is essential to achieving the close, rewarding, and long-lasting relationships that can drive outcomes for mentoring programs. Every mentoring relationship has challenges along the way (as with any human relationship) and those formed between LGBTQ youth and their mentors may face some additional challenges that mentoring programs will want to be prepared to address. Here we offer recommendations—beyond those generally recommended in the *Elements*—for supporting LGBTQ mentees, their mentors, and their families.



MONITORING AND SUPPORT

ONGOING MENTOR SUPPORT

Regardless of whether mentors are matched with youth who are out or not in the program context, mentor handbooks and similar handouts and tip sheets from trainings should address how all mentors can be inclusive and welcoming of LGBTQ issues when working with youth. The “Training” section of this guide offers more detailed explanations of the many topics mentors will need to know, but mentor handbooks should include the following guidance:

- Using respectful language related to sexual orientation and gender identity and expression.
- Addressing homophobic or other bigoted behavior or attitudes from the mentee.
- Handling situations where the young person comes out to the mentor.
- Maintaining confidentiality and handling disclosures.
- Dealing with situations where the mentee is estranged from their family or other supports as a result of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

According to one study,¹ almost 40 percent of all LGBTQ individuals first told a friend or family member about their identity between the ages of 10 and 19—the range that most youth mentoring programs serve. Mentors can also expect instances in which mentees may feel more comfortable confiding in them than in their own parents/guardians. The same study found that about one third of LGBTQ

adults had not shared information about their sexual orientation with their parents, whereas 86 percent of them had told a close friend.² A separate study examining who LGBTQ youth turned to for support in school settings found that teachers and other adults in the school who were good listeners, open-minded, nonjudgmental, who shared a common interest with them, and who supported other marginalized students were the adults they most trusted in seeking advice and in confiding their orientation or identity. These qualities are the types of traits that we hope to see in all mentors, and they may be especially powerful for youth who are considering disclosing a big aspect of themselves that has, until that point, remained hidden. Thus, all mentors should be prepared for their mentees to share sensitive information and practice how they will respond in these important moments.

Benchmark 5.9 goes far beyond just mentor handbooks and other written materials. One recommendation strongly endorsed by this project’s working group is to provide mentors of LGBTQ youth with an opportunity to meet socially or virtually to discuss how their mentoring relationship is going, the hurdles they have faced (or that their mentee is facing), and how they can best support these young people in their unique journey. This can be a great way to build the mentor’s knowledge base, get tips about community resources, and develop a strong cohort of allies and committed mentors for LGBTQ mentees. Program staff can kick off these groups with some simple logistical planning and conversation starters. Over time, these types of groups can



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be led by experienced mentors or other allies from the LGBTQ community.

ONGOING LGBTQ MENTEE SUPPORT

There are some key ways that mentoring programs can provide additional support and supplemental programming to LGBTQ youth. As a recommendation under **E.5.2**, many members of this project's working group suggest offering group activities to build strong relationships between all the youth in the program and to connect LGBTQ youth to a wider network of supportive relationships. This

can involve access to discussion groups and online communities (often through the program but also including groups outside of the mentoring agency). For example, LifeWorks (see sidebar) collaborates with many community partners and other programs to establish ongoing internal youth group meetings to discuss critical issues that are important to them (these youth-led groups meet at different frequencies depending on the level of interest around the topic, with some groups meeting weekly, monthly, or a single time for a special topical discussion). This type of programming can be very impactful

EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: **LifeWorks**

LifeWorks offers an array of regular programming, where young people can gather to speak openly about their experiences and participate in fun, age-appropriate activities. These groups provide young people a safe space where they can engage in everyday activities without having to fear judgement or harassment from others. Programs are offered weekly, biweekly, or as one-time engagements and range in topics from martial arts classes to “gaymers” night (for video game enthusiasts) to discussion groups about masculinity and femininity. Some activities focus on identity, while others, like a 5K run or hike, promote personal development and healthy milestones.

LifeWorks' programming features different activities intended for matches, families, and just youth. LifeWorks hosts an annual Valentine's Day dance for youth participants, where young people are encouraged to bring a friend, significant other, or attend on their own. These youth-only events help young people acquire and develop social skills that may have been previously impeded by harassment or bullying in cisnormative and heteronormative environments. The “LifeOut” program also provides matches with low- or no-cost activities out in the community every month, including bowling nights and bike rides. These events give program staff an opportunity to check in with matches, assess how relationships are progressing, and offer guidance when matches are in need of support.

These activities enable program participants to socialize and engage in healthy relationships with others their age. Youth can connect with peers who have shared similar experiences, enjoy everyday activities in an affirming environment, and support one another. For many, these are their first experiences surrounded by other LGBTQ young people, and many begin to see their queerness as a positive attribute as a result.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: Gender Spectrum

Gender Spectrum connects young people from around the globe in meaningful peer connections based on shared interests and identities. LGBTQ youth can participate in a variety of topic-based online discussion groups that encourage young people to discuss the intersections of their identities with supportive peers. Young people can register for topics like navigating gender as a pre-teen, faith and gender, and the intersection of race and gender. Discussion groups typically meet for one hour weekly for four sessions, and participants can join via webcam, phone, or chat. Trained adults facilitate the groups by preparing an opening activity or question, then creating an open space for young people to lead the conversation and connect. For parents, caregivers, and other adult family members, there are separate topic-based discussion groups focused on creating trust with their teen, self-care for parents and caregivers, and navigating a young person's gender within the Christian faith.

The online forum allows young people from all backgrounds, geographic regions, and familial situations to join this supportive community with an element of privacy. Some young people join by phone or chat from settings outside the home (e.g., libraries and parks) so that they can speak openly about their identities without being overheard by family members. The groups also enable individuals from rural and remote areas, where there may not be others who share the same intersectional identity, to congregate with a community of peers. One group included ten participants from seven different states and Argentina, showing participants that they are part of a community bigger than themselves.

These groups foster a sense of belonging and demonstrate that youth with unique, intersectional identities are not alone. Gender Spectrum's surveys show that just knowing these groups exist had a positive effect on the mental wellness of participants. Participants can connect with peers without having to be hyper-vigilant about the language they use or accidentally disclosing something they wanted to keep private. As young people participate in different groups over time, they are exposed to myriad of adult facilitators who reflect the LGBTQ community's diverse interests, stories, and identities. These adults can provide a beacon of hope to participants, who may have never before seen examples of gender expansive adults living successful and happy lives.

for LGBTQ youth and can allow them another safe space to share their stories and get advice on how to maximize their mentoring relationship.

Gender Spectrum takes an even broader approach: online discussion groups offered to many different subgroups of mentees (recognizing their intersectionality), which connects youth to a much wider group of supportive peers (see sidebar).

Group activities can also involve more intensive community participation (youth engaging in Pride Month activities, for example) or even activism, as

well as gay-straight alliance type programming that gets LGBTQ mentees collectively doing projects in the world with their gay and straight peers.

The sidebar on the work of the GSA Network illustrates the power that comes from organizing LGBTQ youth and this type of engagement can be a great way to supplement mentoring services with a group peer component. (Note that "GSA" in their organization's case stands for Genders and Sexualities Alliances, but the work is built on the more commonly known framework of gay-straight alliances.)



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: GSA Network

GSA Network is committed to fostering leadership and advocacy skills and cultivating supportive peer connections through local GSA (Genders & Sexualities Alliance, sometimes called Gay-Straight Alliance) clubs. A GSA club is a student-run club in a high school, middle school, or elementary school setting that connects LGBTQQ and straight students in an effort to create safe spaces to socialize, support each other's sexual orientations and gender identities and expression, and advocate for racial, gender, and LGBTQ justice. Students develop their own mission statements, create agendas and facilitate meetings, and mobilize campaigns. Clubs are formed and led by students and are supported by an adviser, who receives training on the GSA model and how to support LGBTQQ youth.

GSA clubs provide young people with a safe space to socialize with like-minded peers who may have shared similar experiences. Club participants can engage in open conversations about their experiences with romantic relationships, the coming out process, transitioning, or having LGBTQ parents or siblings. This supportive setting allows young people to process their experiences away from students who may not understand or acknowledge their identities. Some advisers maintain a list of mental and sexual health services and make referrals when students need additional support, and other clubs bring in speakers to address prevalent topics. For many GSA club members, the GSA Leadership Summits and camps are their first experience being surrounded by a majority LGBTQ community.

GSA clubs often engage in advocacy efforts in their schools and communities, with students presenting at school assemblies, creating poster campaigns, and participating in national LGBTQ awareness campaigns like GLSEN's Day of Silence. The GSA Network provides students in the clubs with training, resources, and a platform to advocate in their communities. At the annual Queer Youth Advocacy Day, GSA youth activists and adult allies meet with representatives from their districts at California's State Capitol. Students educate policymakers about school safety issues and advocate for laws and policies that will make schools safer. GSA Network helps to prepare students for these meetings by offering leadership trainings, bias awareness activities, storytelling workshops, and other training opportunities. These experiences help young people build leadership skills that equip them to succeed in college and beyond, while also building the next generation of LGBTQ leaders in the United States.

Another way programs can support LGBTQQ youth and their mentoring relationships is to offer referrals to other services or learning opportunities that are beyond the scope of the program itself. In some cases, those services are provided under the auspices of a multiservice agency that also houses the mentoring program. In the example offered by True Colors here, mentoring programs can build a referral network that complements their mentoring work, recognizing that LGBTQQ youth and/or their families may need services that are best handled by organizations with differing expertise areas. This

can allow the programs' mentors to focus on the relationship and support the youth in ways that best align with their training and role in the agency.

ENHANCING MATCH ACTIVITIES

While programs can offer these types of ongoing supports and referrals to mentors and youth separately, there are also opportunities for mentors and youth to work together collaboratively on meaningful activities with ongoing support from the program. One new Enhancement introduced here is directly offering, or connecting mentors and youth



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: True Colors

True Colors provides systems-involved LGBTQQ youth with comprehensive support, yet the organization occasionally finds that mentees need services beyond what True Colors is able to offer. Over the past 25 years, True Colors has curated a comprehensive list of local organizations in Connecticut serving systems-involved and LGBTQQ youth, so that they can connect youth with additional resources and services as needed. This wide-ranging resource guide is given to youth and mentors and includes information about local clinicians, health care providers, mental health providers, community-based youth groups, parent support groups, community centers, and PFLAG.

The landscape of youth-serving organizations is ever-changing, so True Colors regularly audits the resource guide to ensure programs are still functioning and contact information is up-to-date. Every year, True Colors engages interns (some of whom are college or graduate students, others of whom have participated in the mentoring program themselves) in reviewing the resource guide and updating the information. This drives interns to learn about resources available in the community while supporting the program's operations. The resource guide is updated twice a year in digital form, and once a year in hard copy format.

True Colors program staff use this guide to make referrals to external services, when needed. Mentors will sometimes hear about situations that warrant additional attention and raise these issues to program staff. One mentor recently learned that her mentee was couch surfing (i.e., was homeless and moving from one temporary sleeping arrangement to another) and conveyed this information to staff, who researched and are connecting the young person with local housing services. The resource guide empowers mentors and staff to connect young people with the much-needed support that exists outside the program's purview.

to, opportunities to engage in leadership development opportunities, civic activism, and community change efforts. Mentoring relationships are excellent contexts for fostering youth empowerment and engaging in true youth-adult partnerships that not only deepen the relationship but allow the young person to effect meaningful change in their community.³

Mentors can be involved in many of the mentee support activities and events noted above, such as joining discussion groups or supporting the GSA work of the mentees, if programs find that those are the easiest paths to fostering stronger youth-adult partnerships.

MONITORING AND SUPPORT REFERENCES

¹Pew Research Center. (2013). *A survey of LGBT Americans: Attitudes, experiences and values in changing times*. Washington, DC: Author.

²Pew Research Center, 2013.

³Weiston-Serdan, T. (2017). *Critical mentoring: A practical guide*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing.



CLOSURE

B.6.7 and B.6.8 Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors (and mentees and their parents/guardians) that includes the following topics of conversation (see original *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* for original listing of closure topics):

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program includes discussion in the closure process that focuses on identity growth during the relationship.

E.6.3 Program staff should provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.

- **LGBTQ Recommendation:** Program creates opportunities within mentoring relationships for LGBTQ youth to learn how to identify and recruit mentors and allies who can serve as positive in-person role models, so that they can grow a larger web of support for their post-mentoring journey.

Justification

While all program participants deserve a program-led closure process that allows for the match to have resolution and opportunities for reflection and ongoing participation (when possible), the reality is that many matches do not have the type of closure experiences that programs articulate as standard practices. One recent study of closure procedures across multiple programs found that more than 60 percent of matches that closed never had a final meeting together to say goodbye and process feelings around the relationship ending, with another 11 percent planning a meeting that subsequently did

not happen.¹ Given LGBTQQ mentees' potential for feelings of rejection and other negative consequences from a match ending, especially if the match ends prematurely, it is critical that mentoring programs give all young people, parents/guardians, and mentors the gift of a well-managed process with the opportunity to say goodbye.

The Benchmarks and Enhancements in the *Elements* related to closure are intended to provide this structure (although it is up to programs to adequately staff this aspect of the program, which can sometimes be overlooked in an effort to quickly rematch a child or move on to recruiting new mentees and mentors). Here we offer a few simple recommendations that can strengthen the closure process and make it more meaningful for LGBTQQ youth and their parents/guardians.

REFLECTING ON IDENTITY GROWTH

The main edition of the *Elements* suggests several topics that should be covered during a mentee's final closure meeting with program staff and/or mentors (e.g., discussing feelings about closure, reflecting on personal growth, and understanding rules around future contact). Here, for LGBTQQ youth, we offer the additional topic of identity development. Forming an identity, a sense of both current self and possible future selves, is considered to be one of the cornerstone pathways through which young people benefit from mentoring,² yet rarely are youth given an opportunity to reflect on and express how their identity and sense of self has grown through the program. For young people who may be navigating through



CLOSURE

the process of understanding, accepting, and sharing their identity, this may be a time of profound development and change. Even in circumstances where the mentor was not as helpful as hoped, the young person may have learned something about themselves—how they carry themselves in relationships, their values, and their strengths and weaknesses. They may have also achieved a new sense of belonging in the world that they can carry forward from the experience. Programs should make sure that all mentees, including LGBTQ youth, have a chance to reflect on how they have changed during the match, and how their time in the program has helped them discover, in part, who they truly are.

PREPARING FOR THE NEXT MENTORS

Research suggests that very few LGBTQ youth have mentors—either naturally or through formal programs—in their lives.³ Many of these young people will look to social media and popular entertainment, in an attempt to find examples of people with whom they identify. In cases where LGBTQ youth are *only* able to find remote/inaccessible role models to emulate, outcomes for these young people—as compared to LGBTQ youth without role models—appear to be more negative.⁴ In contrast, LGBTQ youth with access to natural in-person mentors are able to secure a range of very individualized support, including social, informational, and self-appraisal (positive self-reflection) guidance as the youth moves through phases of identity development and into their adulthood.⁵ Such differences in outcomes between youth with in-person role models and those without suggests that mentors, and mentoring pro-

grams, have a responsibility to “pass the torch” to the next set of mentors in their mentee’s life. This is essential for ensuring that further support is accessible and becomes integrated into the youth’s trajectory moving forward.

Some programs do this very intentionally by referring mentees to other programs when they move along as part of a major life transition (moving to another city or attending college). Others take a more youth-centered approach, teaching mentees to map out areas where they need ongoing support, identify characteristics they want in a mentor, brainstorm lists of potential adults to ask to be mentors, and teach how to ask for and maintain a new mentoring relationship with one or more adults once they are out of the program. Life plans, network maps, and circles of support are common tools programs use to help codify this support network. They often will also practice challenging aspects of entering a new relationship, such as the initial “ask” or how to respond when a new mentor does not respect boundaries. This allows the young person to practice taking the lead in “owning” their future mentoring within the safety of an existing mentoring relationship.

Regardless of the route programs choose, mentors and staff should work together to help each LGBTQ mentee feel confident and prepared to find additional adult support as they leave the program. For a great example of what this can look like in practice, see the case study below about True Colors’ closure process and how they help youth both find internal strengths and access additional resources in the community that will carry them forward.



EFFECTIVE LGBTQ MENTORING IN ACTION: True Colors

True Colors prepares mentees for match closure by equipping them with life skills that will support their independence and success after their relationship ends. Throughout the program, True Colors staff and mentors help youth feel more confident about accessing resources and connecting with supportive services and individuals. When mentees need food stamps, housing, or other services, mentors and staff support the young person in identifying and reaching out to the appropriate agencies. Even after the mentoring relationship concludes, True Colors offers a safe and supportive space for young people to come back to. Program staff strive to keep contact with mentees until they are living in safe and stable environments, and mentees are always welcome to return to the office for continued support.

True Colors' mentor and mentee contract states that matches will last for a minimum of one year, yet matches are encouraged to maintain lifelong relationships. After matches have been together for one year, the mentor and mentee meet with the mentoring program Director and determine whether the match should continue for another year. After the second-year anniversary, matches are no longer formally recognized or managed by the program, yet they are encouraged to maintain the relationship on their own. The Director, mentor, and mentee meet at the two-year milestone to discuss what this new relationship will look like moving forward.

CLOSURE REFERENCES

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⁵Torres, R. S., Harper, G. W., Sánchez, B., Fernández, M. I., & Adolescent Trials Network for HIV/AIDS Interventions (2012). Examining natural mentoring relationships (NMRs) among self-identified gay, bisexual, and questioning (GBQ) male youth. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 34, 8-14.



PROGRAM EVALUATION

The following recommendations offer ways in which mentoring programs can more effectively serve LGBTQQ youth by tracking and evaluating services provided and specific outcomes.

- Program evaluates the effectiveness of staff training in increasing employees' knowledge about, and skills for working effectively with, LGBTQQ youth.
- Program evaluates the effectiveness of mentor training in increasing mentors' knowledge about, and skills for working effectively with, LGBTQQ youth.
- Program considers documenting and tracking outcomes relevant to LGBTQQ youth (e.g., improved feelings of social support or sense of belonging; reductions in gender identity-related stereotype threat or certain risky behaviors), noting that many of these outcomes will be relevant to other youth subgroups as well.
- Program directly involves LGBTQQ youth in evaluation planning, which honors their input into how success is defined and can facilitate gathering feedback on how well the organization is serving them.

DISCUSSION

Generally speaking, most youth mentoring programs will not need to change their evaluative practices to examine outcomes that are relevant for LGBTQQ youth. The areas that most programs focus on—academic success, self-esteem and competence, healthy behaviors, acquisition of new skills, improved relationships with others, etc.—are all equally applicable to LGBTQQ youth as with any other group of young people served by the program. However, there are a few instances where more of a focus on the needs and programmatic outcomes of LGBTQQ youth may be necessary, which are outlined below.



PROGRAM EVALUATION

DURING YOUTH INTAKE

As noted in the “Program Design and Management” section of this supplement, programs should proactively gather information about the LGBTQQ status of young people as they enter the program. They may also want to, given the increased victimization and risky behaviors exhibited by LGBTQQ youth, consider assessing each youth’s experiences of bullying and harassment, their trauma exposure, their levels of family support, and other aspects of their risks and protective factors. This is likely to be information the program will want to collect on all youth served, but it may be especially helpful in ensuring that LGBTQQ youth are matched with a well-prepared mentor who is able to meet their needs and form a strong relationship.

This information can also be helpful later in explaining differences in the impact of the program for some youth. For example, a program might find that LGBTQQ youth with fewer prior experiences with severe peer bullying, or less rejection from their parents, experienced stronger relationships and better outcomes than their peers who had not been through those experiences prior to joining the program. Conversely, a program might find that these rejected youth benefitted the most from the program, implying that their mentoring relationship was a much-needed source of support and personal growth. Programs that do not have that level of information about each participant are less able to say who the program is best supporting and who might need even more intensive support. Examining these types of moderators can help programs fine-tune

their services (e.g., extra training) and assess what types of mentors are a good fit for particular youth circumstances (e.g., the mentor traits needed to work with a youth experiencing rejection at home).

Programs looking to measure these risks and protective factors may want to start with that particular section of the [Measurement Guidance Toolkit](#), a free online resource developed by the National Mentoring Resource Center. This resource profiles validated, ready-to-use scales that cover many of the additional pieces of background information about a child that might be useful in better supporting LGBTQQ youth. This information could also be useful in interpreting program outcomes and identifying the types of young people who are most benefitting (or not) from the services.

Training Evaluation

Much of the success of working effectively with LGBTQQ youth is grounded in the knowledge and skills of the staff and mentors directly engaging with them. Therefore, programs are encouraged to evaluate the effectiveness of the training offered on this topic. Previous sections of this supplement have suggested the content for these trainings. Evaluations should assess whether the training has increased knowledge and feelings of self-competence in critical knowledge and skills (ideally compared to a pre-training baseline). These evaluations should ideally be completed immediately after a training so that participants can reflect on what they have learned, offer feedback on the training itself, and identify areas where they feel they may need more



PROGRAM EVALUATION

help. Programs are also encouraged to follow up with training participants several months after the training to see if they have applied any of the knowledge or skills gained in their work with youth. It can be helpful to understand, for example, that mentors know a lot more about LGBTQQ issues, but that they are having a hard time responding to critical relationship moments or are struggling to offer the right support to mentees who are engaged in a coming out process. These post-training follow-ups can identify areas for increased match support and ensure that the training being offered is actionable and applied directly in the relationships themselves.

EXAMINING PROGRAM OUTCOMES

As noted above, most mentoring programs use a uniform set of outcome measures for all young people in the program; however, one strategy suggested by this project's working group was to make sure that evaluation work involving LGBTQQ youth takes note of the progress of the match on specific issues identified in goal-setting tools, "life plans," or other formalized documents that guide the time the mentor and mentee spend together. Given that LGBTQQ youth face numerous unique challenges that often place them at deficits when growing into a healthy adulthood, it follows that they will also have some very specific issues they want to overcome with a mentor's support or highly individualized goals related to their identity or expression. Programs may want to track this personalized progress toward, and attainment of, youth-specific goals. Most important, this evaluation process might indicate whether the program is meeting the needs of its LGBTQQ mentees.

Mentoring programs solely serving LGBTQQ youth may want to track outcomes that are relevant to that work, including tracking them through periods of transition or in rebounding from negative experiences. Programs that exclusively serve LGBTQQ youth may emphasize outcomes such as:

- Increased knowledge of and connection to the LGBTQ community and resources where they live.
- Improved sense of belonging and acceptance.
- Identity development and improved sense of self.
- Reduced risky behaviors (following up on those measured at entry into the program).
- Decreased bullying and harassment or improved peer relations.
- Improved perceptions of external support or growth in networks of supportive peers and adults.
- Increased perceptions of social competence.
- Improved family support.
- Reduced stereotype threats or other negative self-perceptions related to their LGBTQQ status.

As always, we encourage programs to use only validated and reliable measurement tools, such as those suggested in the Measurement Guidance Toolkit or those provided by evaluation and research partners.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Family Acceptance Project is a [research, intervention, education and policy](#) initiative that works to prevent health and mental health risks for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) children and youth, including suicide, homelessness and HIV – in the context of their families, cultures and faith communities.

GLSEN's 2015 National School Climate Survey Report includes information on LGBTQ middle and high school students' experiences in school settings, which includes findings on victimization, bias, and harassment.

Human Rights Campaign 2018 LGBTQ Youth Report documents current experiences of LGBTQ youth, which includes exposure to risk and experiences with resiliency.

Human Rights Campaign SOGIE Data Collection Guide contains best practices for collecting data on sexual orientation and gender identity/expression.

National Mentoring Resource Center's Mentoring Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, Intersex, and Gender Nonconforming Youth is a population review that examines research on mentoring effectiveness and outcomes for LGBTQ youth.

PFLAG is a [national grassroots organization](#) that seeks to make sure that all people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer are not only valued by society, but take pride in and value themselves.

The Trevor Project Support Center & Helpline Crisis Intervention for LGBT Youth (open 24/7) 1-800-850-8078

The True Colors Fund is a 501(c)(3) [nonprofit organization](#) working to end homelessness among lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, creating a world in which young people can be their true selves.

The Williams Institute's Report Ensuring Access to Mentoring Programs for LGBTQ Youth examines inclusive mentor programming and policies for LGBTQ youth.

Trans Student Educational Resources is a [youth-led organization](#) dedicated to transforming the educational environment for trans and gender nonconforming students through advocacy and empowerment.

U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention website has data on the health risks of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Exchange Review of the LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative Planning Phase documents the design and planning phase of two cross-sector community partnerships to address and prevent LGBTQ youth homelessness.





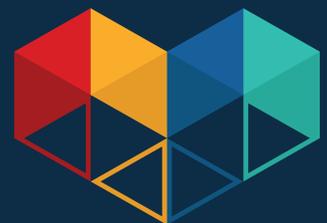


GROUP MENTORING

SUPPLEMENT TO THE

***ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE
PRACTICE FOR MENTORING***

April 2020



MENTOR

MENTOR is the unifying champion for quality youth mentoring in the United States. Our mission is to expand the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships nationwide. Potential is equally distributed; opportunity is not. A major driver of healthy development and opportunity is who you know and who's in your corner. 30 years ago, MENTOR was created to expand that opportunity for young people by building a youth mentoring field and movement, serving as the expert and go-to resource on quality mentoring. The result is a more than 10-time increase in young people in structured mentoring relationships, from hundreds of thousands to millions. Today, we activate a movement across sectors that is diverse and broad and seeps into every aspect of daily life. We are connecting and fueling opportunity for young people everywhere they are from schools to workplaces and beyond.

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INTRODUCTION

While youth mentoring is most often conceptualized as a one-to-one relationship between a single caring adult and a young person, the reality is that group mentoring models reach as many young people as the more traditional individualized programs.

A 2016 national survey of mentoring programs¹ found that 35 percent of all mentees were served by group models, slightly more than the 34 percent served exclusively in one-to-one programs. This was in spite of the fact that one-to-one programs accounted for more than half the programs surveyed. Only 19 percent of programs offered a group model, but they served as many youth as all the one-to-one programs combined.

Furthermore, another 12 percent of mentees were served in “blended” models where they were paired with a personal mentor, but participated almost entirely in group activities along with that mentor. A similar study over 20 years ago² found that group and blended programs accounted for only 21 percent of all programs—today that number has jumped to 33 percent of all programs, with the accompanying growth in youth served that shift would suggest. In terms of young people served, group mentoring contexts actually represent the majority of the programmatic mentoring youth receive.

In addition to these formal group mentoring programs, there is an almost infinite landscape of mentoring-like group youth work in after-school programs, hobby clubs, sports and recreation programs, and camps. While these may not constitute the types of traditional mentoring

services we often associate with this field, these environments do offer adults and youth the opportunity to engage in mentoring activities and the types of enriching adult-youth interactions we associate with more traditional mentoring. In fact, a 2018 survey by MENTOR³ found that the majority of adults’ structured mentoring engagements came in these group contexts, with the average mentor nationally reporting working with around eight young people a year. So from the perspective of how young people get their mentoring through programs and institutions at large, group mentoring seems to be the predominant pathway to getting mentoring support.

This growth in group mentoring has happened for a variety of reasons, the most obvious being, as noted above, that these programs reach large volumes of youth and therefore represent an opportunity to scale mentoring relationships without scaling volunteer recruitment (and possibly at a potentially reduced cost per youth served). There is also growing evidence⁴ that the group interactions with both peers and adults represent unique opportunities for personal growth, skill-building, and healthy peer support that one-to-one adult-youth programs simply can’t provide. When done well, group mentoring offers a chance to get a wealth of adult mentor support, while also strengthening connections to peers and fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness that would be hard to facilitate through a relationship with just one mentor. So for some youth, group mentoring might be the most effective form of support because it offers a chance to develop socially or build community in ways that meet their needs.

WHY DEVELOP A SUPPLEMENT ON GROUP MENTORING?

What's interesting about this growth in the popularity and scope of group mentoring is that the practice literature and research has not really kept pace with the reality on the ground. One recent study of a group mentoring program for the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention explicitly noted the dearth of implementation materials and practical guidance for group mentoring programs.⁵ Further, in spite of the large number of children served in these programs, the vast majority of the available research on youth mentoring focuses on one-to-one models. This has resulted in the practice guidance available to group programs being both limited and separate from much of the research on “what works” in mentoring programs.

Even while developing the fourth edition of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (EPPM), MENTOR and our research partners recognized that the Benchmarks and Enhancements in that product were not terribly well-aligned with the practical realities of a group model. For example, concepts like making “matches” or “closing” relationships become much more complicated when there are multiple mentors and youth in the mix. Preparing participants for their roles also takes on much more nuance and detail, as mentors need to be trained on not only how to relate to a single mentee, but how to manage a group or even coordinate their role with that of a co-mentor, while young people need to know not only their responsibilities to their mentor but to the other youth in the group, as well. These programs also tend to be very heavy on structured activities and the use of set curriculum, meaning that mentors and youth also need preparation and support to effectively participate

Defining Group Mentoring

For the purposes of this publication, group mentoring is defined as a mentoring program in which a mentor (or small number of mentors) works with multiple youth in an ongoing, set group. This includes standard group mentoring (one mentor working with a group of youth), co-mentoring (where two to three mentors work with a larger group of youth), and “team” mentoring (where a group of mentors with specific and complementary skill sets work with a group of youth). The definition also takes into consideration “hybrid” models where youth are paired with an individual mentor but participate exclusively in group activities with other pairs. We included programs in our review where dedicated mentors were “incorporated” into an existing program or service with a focus other than mentoring, but where the work of mentors was intended to bolster outcomes for groups of youth.

All of these program types may engage in a variety of activities and mentoring interactions, but what truly defines them is that mentoring relationships are established between the adults and youth, while similarly deep and meaningful relationships are also developed among the peer participants in the groups. Please see later in this section for a breakdown of how these types of group mentoring programs are represented in the research.



in these program components. Group mentoring may reach more youth for a similar cost, but the programming itself is often much more complicated and challenging to implement than a traditional one-to-one program. Yet these programs have the least amount of practice guidance to draw from.

This publication represents an opportunity to change that, to provide practitioners and funders with a clearer set of guidelines to refer to when designing and implementing services. It also expands the usefulness of the EEPM by looking at its core practices through the lens of a group structure that, as noted here, may actually reach more youth than any other mentoring model.

DEVELOPING THIS PUBLICATION

This product represents the sixth topic in MENTOR's series of Supplements to the EEPM, and for each of these we have followed a similar development process, as detailed below.

Search and Review of Group Mentoring Literature

We built on a recent literature search⁶ by one of the authors of this Supplement and conducted a fresh review for additional relevant literature using several full-text databases, including PsychInfo and PubMed, with some further examining of citations included in the previous search. The review emphasized several key criteria, including prioritizing research studies employing an experimental design, limiting results to programs serving youth from elementary school through young adulthood (roughly ages 5 through 24), and emphasizing programs that employed group activities as a primary or core component. We included some book chapters, reports, and other documents that fell outside of these criteria, but tried as much as possible to prioritize peer-reviewed scientific literature.



General Process for Supplement Development

1. Literature search and review
2. Synthesis of findings/themes
3. Formation of a Working Group of practitioners (and other research experts)
4. Draft initial recommendations within EEPM framework
5. Obtain several rounds of feedback from the Working Group
6. Create "Practice in Action" snapshots from real-life programs
7. Finalize the recommendations and write the justification
8. Obtain feedback on the justifications and final product
9. Disseminate and develop trainings on the Supplement

The result was a collection of **129 articles** that we relied on as our core source material, including the following:

- **84 studies reporting on 53 distinct mentoring programs**, including the following:
 - 25 program descriptions, case studies, or studies focused on design, implementation, or program processes
 - 59 empirical outcome studies
- **39 studies providing background information** relevant to group interventions for youth in general (e.g., processes in group psychotherapy, meta-analysis, developmental processes involved in peer relationships)
- **6 studies reported on non-programmatic mentoring** that was embedded in various youth activity settings and contexts

Characteristics of the 53 programs were as follows:

- **Study design** (some studies used two or more methods, or included multiple studies of the same program):
 - 14 experimental research design (randomized control trials)
 - 23 quasi-experimental (nonrandomized) comparison group design
 - 9 nonexperimental (pre-post, correlational)
 - 16 qualitative
- **Mentee population age group** (22 programs served two or more age groups):
 - 10 elementary school
 - 28 middle school
 - 33 high school
 - 10 young adult

- **Mentor population** (five programs employed two or more types of mentors):
 - 44 adults
 - 7 college students
 - 6 cross-age peers
- **Program settings**
 - 23 school-based
 - 21 site-based
 - 4 community or flexible locations/settings
 - 2 online
- **Program goals** (most programs addressed two or more goals)
 - 30 Positive Youth Development/Social-Emotional Learning
 - 17 Academic Achievement
 - 13 Health Risk Behavior
 - 13 Externalizing Behavior Problems (Delinquency, Violence)
 - 10 Physical Health and Development (including sports)
 - 8 Improving Relationships/Social Skills
 - 7 Internalizing Behavior Problems (Anxiety, Depression, PTSD)
 - 7 Career Development
 - Other goals included parenting, disability, and transitions (e.g., aging out of foster care)



We developed a general typology (see Table 1) that offers a rough overview of the varied models of group mentoring. This typology enabled us to further characterize the range of programs in the review, including the following:

- **44 programs followed a general “One-to-Many” approach** to group mentoring:

- 20 programs employed two or more co-mentors
- 2 used a team approach with differentiated roles for the mentors within each group
- 5 programs were “unmatched” meaning that mentors and mentees were not necessarily in set groups, and/or that membership and attendance were somewhat fluid

- **6 programs used a “hybrid” approach** to group mentoring:

- 2 programs integrated one-to-one and group mentoring by creating groups of one-to-one matches
- 2 multicomponent programs included both one-to-one mentoring and separate group activities (group mentors were not necessarily the same as one-to-one mentors)
- 2 hybrid programs were difficult to classify based on the descriptions

- **3 group mentoring programs were difficult to classify** based on the descriptions.

In addition to group mentoring programs, we identified several instances of mentoring that occurred within the context of existing youth activity settings. We labeled these as “incorporated group mentoring” in that the mentoring that occurred was intentional (e.g., adults received relevant training and encouragement), but was not

necessarily programmatic (e.g., little or no matching or match support) and remained secondary to the goals of the youth program or setting:

- Six incorporated group mentoring examples were identified in the literature.
- Youth settings in which incorporated group mentoring occurred included arts programs, sports teams, after-school programs or clubs, and teacher advisory groups.

Major Trends from the Research

In addition to the breakdown of study and program characteristics, the team of authors also read and coded each source with relevant keywords, allowing us to identify patterns and trends in the disparate articles we were reading. A few trends are worth noting, that shaped the conclusions and recommendations found in the remainder of this Supplement.

There is beginning to be a critical mass of rigorous outcome evaluation or implementation studies that can help point to “best” practices, although significant gaps remain. There is growing evidence that group mentoring can be effective in contributing to a wide range of outcomes. Studies are beginning to look at aspects of design and implementation, although much of the work informing these issues continues to rely on experience and practitioner wisdom, rather than empirical results. Whereas empirical work on approaches that are related to group mentoring — such as group psychotherapy and support groups — offers helpful suggestions, it is not always clear how well those suggestions apply to group mentoring. Some empirical studies offered hints about important topics, such as optimal mentor-to-mentee ratios, and the types of training and skills that are needed, but rigorous research is still lacking. For example, one analysis showed that smaller ratios

(similar to the one-to-four ratio recommended in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* and reiterated later in this Supplement) were associated with greater youth reports of group cohesion and a sense of closeness with mentors than larger ratios;⁷ however, such analysis has not examined the broad range of types of programs identified in this review. But there is clearly a need for more evaluation of local programs that can grow our understanding of group mentoring practices and outcomes. For one example of a group program that is committed to program evaluation, see the “Practice in Action” profile of Soccer for Success in the final section of this resource.

There is tremendous diversity and creativity in the ways that group mentoring programs are designed and delivered. We were able to classify most of the programs in our review in one of several categories of “one-to-many” and “hybrid” programs, with variations of each. Still, the diversity of programs made drawing the boundaries defining each of these categories somewhat fuzzy. For example, we classified one sports-based program as a “one-to-many” group program because mentoring was central to the program itself but classified an initiative to train youth sports coaches in youth development and mentoring skills as non-programmatic “incorporated group mentoring.” Along the same lines, it was sometimes difficult to define the boundaries of what did and did not count as a group mentoring program. For example, we agreed that a youth intervention program that followed a highly interactive, manualized curriculum was not an example of group mentoring, whereas another curriculum-driven program that included intentional time and space for more informal group interaction did count as an example of group mentoring.

On a different note, the literature reflects great ideas about ways to capitalize on the positive potential of peer interactions and ways of integrating adult mentor and peer processes. We saw examples of youth discussing personal challenges together, engaging in project-based learning, using the group to normalize traumatic experiences, using role plays to give youth a space to practice new skills, and other creative engagement structures.

Processes through which group mentoring can facilitate positive gains or personal growth for youth. One of things that stood out in the review was the idea that group mentoring offers a unique opportunity to integrate the power of the mentoring relationship with positive group and peer processes. Group processes include a sense of belonging and group cohesion, a group identity, a safe space, a context for establishing positive group norms around things like confidentiality and also reinforcing individual and group goals, and an opportunity for young people to experience not just receiving help but being able to provide help to their peers. A rich qualitative literature has begun to document ways that youth are able to observe and to participate directly in interactions between mentors and youth and between youth and their peers; and to show how these layers of relationships, perhaps the most unique feature of group mentoring, can help nurture personal growth for youth (for example, see articles by Dowd et al., 2015;⁸ Griffith et al. 2019;⁹ and Sanchez et al, 2018¹⁰).

A few quantitative studies are starting to show that processes like a sense of belonging and perceived group cohesion are potentially important drivers of a broad range of youth development outcomes. On the other hand, there is little evidence that negative group processes, sometimes called “peer contagion”¹¹ or “deviancy training” are playing a large role in group mentoring. Instead, positive



interaction between peers often seemed like the main driver of benefits for youth. In some ways, mentors in group programs sometimes take on a different, almost secondary role, and as such, might be more empowering to youth because the adult is offering a less top-down type of relationship.

Factors that can moderate the impact of group mentoring programs on youth outcomes. It is clear from our review that group mentoring programs can be effective in contributing to positive outcomes for a wide range of mentee characteristics, including age, gender, ethnicity, and exposure to risk. Some scholars have argued that group mentoring may be particularly helpful for many youth of color, particularly ones from cultural backgrounds that emphasize interdependence among community members. This is an appealing idea, and there are a few hints that cultural engagement may play a role in whether the group mentoring experience promotes positive outcomes, but research has found no evidence for racial or ethnic differences or of the extent of group cultural diversity in the effectiveness of group mentoring.

Similarly, some scholars have argued that group mentoring may fit the relational orientations of girls. There is some evidence that group mentoring may be more a more effective approach for girls than one-to-one mentoring in some contexts, but no evidence that it is more or less effective for girls than boys. We know very little about the characteristics of mentors that may influence program effectiveness, although many of the implementation challenges noted in the literature suggest that skills in managing conflict and other group dynamics, fostering a safe and inclusive group climate, and maintaining youth interest and commitment to the group are critical skills that mentors should bring. Similarly, we know very little about characteristics of the programs

themselves that make a difference for youth outcomes. One factor to consider is the balance between reliance on a fixed curriculum and more informal group activities or discussions (see the Program Design Considerations in the next section, “Recommendations for Group Mentoring Programs within the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*,” for further discussion).

Factors that can mediate or facilitate the impact of group mentoring programs on youth outcomes. Group mentoring programs are often developed with a goal of fostering “hard” outcomes, such as improved academic achievement, reduced delinquent activity, or improved health behavior. These types of outcomes are very much present in our review, and it is equally important to note that these goals are accompanied by a focus on “softer” skills and outcomes. Both types of outcomes are important in their own right, and as with many other approaches that focus on positive youth development, it is often believed that by helping young people with things like gaining a greater sense of connection with peers and the school they attend and gaining a greater sense of confidence in their ability to succeed, group mentoring programs can help set youth on a trajectory toward achieving those “hard” outcomes.

Some research is starting to suggest that group mentoring may be particularly valuable for fostering young people’s ability to access support resources and build their social networks (sometimes called “social capital”), and for building certain types of competencies, particularly those that involve interacting with peers. Although the findings are mixed, there is emerging evidence that gaining these resources and skills through group mentoring can help drive improvements in those hard outcomes.

All that being said, there is also an additional concern that comes from practitioners who gravitate toward group mentoring: the desire for cost efficiencies. It is not uncommon for service providers to conclude that group approaches may represent an opportunity to serve more youth for similar costs to a one-to-one program. And there is some evidence supporting that conclusion, such as a 2017 MENTOR report detailing that the cost per youth served in group models was generally below that of one-to-one models.¹² But our review of the literature suggests that the “savings” to be found in group mentoring models may be fleeting. Yes, these models serve more children with fewer mentors, but they also require more supervision, more curriculum-driven activities, more off-site outings, more access to physical space and resources, and myriad other considerations that make these programs just as complex and resource-intensive, if not more so, than more traditional one-to-one programs. So anyone coming to group mentoring as a way of increasing volume while cutting costs may be sorely disappointed by the reality of what it takes to run one of these models. Thus, we encourage practitioners to keep the needs of youth in mind — particularly if those youth who could benefit from a group approach — when selecting group models over other forms of mentoring.

Forming a Working Group of Practitioners and Other Researchers

As noted above, the research literature on group mentoring offered some strong hints at effective practices, but was largely absent of direct tests of practices (e.g., was mentor training effective) or comparisons of practices against each other to test effectiveness (e.g., comparing two different mentor recruitment approaches). This leaves us with remaining gaps in our understanding of what makes for an effective group program.

Thus, to augment the information gathered in our literature search, we also formed a Working Group of leading practitioners and organizations that are doing what the authors felt was quality work in the group mentoring space. This group also included technical assistance providers who had done extensive consulting and program development work with clients to build these types of programs. The representatives of this group are detailed below and “Practice in Action” snapshots of their work are included throughout this resource to illustrate how many of the recommendations included here can look like in real-world examples and settings.

This Working Group met a total of five times between November 2019 and February 2020. Their main roles were to share what they felt were key successes and challenges experienced by their programs and to review the iterative drafts of the recommendations ultimately included in this resource. Thus, the recommendations for group mentoring here represent a very intentional blending of the best available research evidence and cutting-edge wisdom from the experiences of leading service providers working in the group mentoring space. The authors thank this Working Group for their incredibly meaningful and insightful contributions to this work.



Gail Breslow and Jen Bourgoin

Clubhouse Network

Since its beginnings more than 25 years ago, The Clubhouse: Where Technology Meets Imagination has been a resource for thousands of young people to explore their own interests, develop skills, and build confidence in themselves through the use of technology. The Clubhouse is simultaneously an inventor’s workshop, design house, sound stage, hackerspace, music studio, and programming lab. At the Clubhouse, underserved youth unleash their creative talents, engage in peer-to-peer learning, and develop a unique voice of their own to express themselves through “STEAM” – STEM and the arts..



Dawn Wiley

Girls Inc.

GIRLS INC. inspires all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. Our comprehensive approach to whole girl development equips girls to navigate gender, economic, and social barriers to grow up healthy, educated, and independent. These positive outcomes are achieved through three core elements:

PEOPLE: trained staff and volunteers who build lasting, mentoring relationships.

ENVIRONMENT: girls-only, physically and emotionally safe environments, where there is a sisterhood of support, high expectations, and mutual respect.

PROGRAMMING: research-based, hands-on and minds-on programming, which is age-appropriate, and meets the needs of today’s girls.

Informed by girls and their families, we also advocate for legislation and policies to increase opportunities for all girls. Join us at girlsinc.org.



Erin Farrell

Project Arrive

The goal of Mentoring for Success (MFS), which is the district wide mentoring initiative that Project Arrive is part of, is to provide students who have multiple barriers to success with a caring adult at school. Its unique school-based model supports school communities with the essential evidence-based ingredients for success. MFS cultivates a collaborative school culture and climate that facilitates school belonging for all students by supporting enhanced professional capacity, individual guidance, transformative mindsets, and high-quality mentoring.





Lisa Lampman

Leadership Foundations

At Leadership Foundations (LF), we believe relationships are always the starting point for creating lasting change. LF is a global network that supports and equips local leaders to transform their cities through the power of relationships. Founded in 1978, LF works in 40 cities, impacting more than 300,000 individuals globally.

Recognizing young people as leaders, and acknowledging their assets and potential, we created a mentoring network to bring transformative relationships into their lives through mentoring. The LF Mentoring Network, formed in 2008, supports group, peer, and one-to-one mentoring matches to more than 1,500 youth annually. One of the LF Network members, Knoxville Leadership Foundation, is highlighted in this supplement.

Knoxville Leadership Foundation (KLF) was founded in 1994 upon the belief that our city has the resources necessary to meet the needs of our communities and the people in them. As a faith-based, entrepreneurial nonprofit, KLF connects human and financial resources to address evolving unmet needs. KLF leads through collaboration, capacity-building, and the creation of programs that focus on mentoring youth, workforce development for at-risk young adults, strengthening nonprofits through collaboration, and improving housing conditions for low-income individuals and families.

Learn more at www.klf.org and www.leadershipfoundations.org.



William Figueroa

Los Angeles Team Mentoring

As pioneers of the team-based mentoring model, Los Angeles Team Mentoring (LATM) connects 1,400 at-risk students with 350 adult mentors each year, providing nearly 100,000 hours of out-of-school intervention. Its proven after-school program, established in 1992, continues to operate exclusively in low-income communities where resources and positive role models are scarce. Through the interactive and goal-based curriculum, youth develop critical skills, gain confidence, and build bridges to a brighter future. To date, LATM has impacted over 28,000 young lives through 2 million hours of service.



Sarah Pickens

U.S. Soccer Foundation, Soccer For Success

Soccer for Success is a free after-school program developed and supported by the U.S. Soccer Foundation. The program is designed to introduce children from kindergarten to eighth grade to the sport of soccer, while also providing them with the tools they need to make healthy lifestyle decisions. Soccer for Success provides a safe and supportive space for children to play and have fun in a structured team environment. The program is designed to help children improve their physical health, increase their knowledge about healthy lifestyles, and improve their self-esteem and behavior.





Darlene Marlin

National Urban League

The National Urban League is a historic civil rights organization dedicated to economic empowerment, equality, and social justice. Founded in 1910 and headquartered in New York City, the Urban League collaborates at the national and local levels with community leaders, policymakers, and corporate partners to elevate standards of living for African-Americans and other historically underserved groups. With 90 affiliates serving 300 communities in 36 states and the District of Columbia, the Urban League spearheads the development of social programs and authoritative public policy research, and advocates for policies and services that close the equality gap.

Jerry Sherk – Consultant

Mentor Management Systems

Mentor Management Systems (MMS) of Encinitas, California has been providing technical assistance to youth mentoring programs for over two decades. During this time, MMS consultants have worked with hundreds of programs to train staff, mentors and mentees, and to create group mentoring curriculum. In the early 2000's, Jerry Sherk, President of MMS, developed and facilitated a number of group mentoring programs in the San Diego Unified School District and at Barona Indian School. Based on his experiences, Jerry wrote a manual called "Designing and Implementing a Group Mentoring Program," which continues to be widely used in the field today. Jerry Sherk, M.A. has a master's degree in counseling psychology and he is the founder of the consulting firm Mentor Management Systems of Encinitas, California. Over the past 25 years, Jerry has helped hundreds of mentoring organizations to develop or improve their operational systems, and to conduct trainings for staff, mentors and mentees.

TIPS FOR USING THIS RESOURCE

This Supplement to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* will be most useful to those starting group mentoring programs, as well as to those who are looking to strengthen their existing services. The recommendations included in the next section, from Recruitment through Closure, offer research- and practice-informed recommendations that should help group mentoring programs implement effective services beyond just adhering to the generic practices suggested in the original

EEPM. We encourage those who are building programs from scratch to also focus on the Program Design Considerations provided at the beginning of the next section, as those major themes and considerations were clearly the most prominent factors in program success (or struggle) in both the literature we read and in the opinion of our Working Group of experts.

If you are not familiar with the structure and content of the original *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, we encourage you to review the baseline

practices suggested in that resource so that you can better understand the additional recommendations of this resource. The recommendations for group mentoring offered here are slotted into the original framework of the EEPM so that practitioners can clearly see where group models require more attention or different approaches to traditional one-to-one programs. Where possible, we have noted when certain recommendations are more or less applicable to certain group mentoring programs based on their setting, match structure, goals and activities, or other specific features. But in general, the **colored recommendations** will provide critical advice to group mentoring programs of all types.

For those who want to go deeper in their understanding of group mentoring practices, there is a Justification and Discussion section that highlights key themes and associated practices for managing a successful group mentoring program. This section discusses the recommendations in more detail and offers examples from the research and literature reviewed that support the suggested practices.

Programs are encouraged to implement as many of the core Benchmarks and Enhancements of the EEPM as possible. There is always room to improve or strengthen the delivery of any program. But we feel that following the recommendations here will be helpful to any mentoring program that is:

- Matching groups of youth with one or more mentors
- Using a group activity format for the activities of mentor-mentee pairs
- Hoping to use peer-to-peer interactions to supplement the guidance and support offered by adult mentors

MENTOR hopes these recommendations help group mentoring programs improve their services and provide youth with meaningful adult and peer interactions. If there is one thing that stood out from all the research reviewed and conversations about quality group mentoring from our time putting this resource together, it's that these programs have a unique ability to help youth feel a sense of belonging, togetherness, and even "family," which is often fleeting in the institutions they engage in every day. Group mentoring appears to be a powerful way of providing youth with a sense of community, with a cohort of caring peers and adults that they might never have found connections with otherwise. These personal connections can be applied to address myriad needs and challenges — everything from academic struggles to processing trauma to improving interpersonal skills — but what is at the core of all these programs is a sense of belonging and togetherness that often exceeds or expands our common understanding of mentoring as a bidirectional intervention. MENTOR hopes that group mentoring models continue to thrive and that this resource can help define and promote quality programming.



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR GROUP MENTORING PROGRAMS WITHIN THE EEPM

The following pages detail the recommendations for group mentoring programs that emerged from the work of this project. Here we include two types of recommendations:

- **Program Design and Development**

Considerations – These represent major themes and considerations for program design and implementation. Programs will need to consider these factors in how they develop and structure services in order to increase their effectiveness and avoid common challenges expressed by experienced practitioners.

- **Recommendations for Practice** – These recommendations provide additional guidance and nuance to the standard *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. These recommendations highlight ways in which group mentoring programs might refine or enhance their day-to-day practice to maximize program success.

As always, these recommendations should be viewed through the lens of the theory of change of the program — the activities, goals, and desired outcomes the program has for youth participants and the specific ways in which the actions of mentors and staff lead to those outcomes. Practitioners looking for one example of a group mentoring theory of change can find a sample version, along with a sample logic model, for a school-based group mentoring program on the National Mentoring Resource Center website at: <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php/learning-opportunities/logic-models-and-theories-of-change.html>

It should be noted that we expect that all group mentoring programs, even those serving groups of youth with many challenges and needs, will be strengths-based in their focus and will generally adhere to the principles of positive youth development. But beyond those general principles, we expect that group mentoring programs will be very diverse in terms of their desired outcomes, contexts, and capacities. Thus, the recommendations below should be viewed and implemented through the lens of a program's specific local circumstances and objectives.

PROGRAM DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

Newly planned group mentoring programs, or those looking to revamp existing services, may want to consider the program design elements noted here. All of these topics were noted research we reviewed and in the conversations with the Working Group about key program features and common challenges.

Determine the match structure that can best support youth participants.

Most common in group mentoring programs are structures where **one mentor** is matched with a small group (-3-6) of youth or a pair of co-mentors works with a slightly larger group (-8-12). The **co-mentoring** approach offers several advantages, including fewer cancelled meetings when a mentor is unavailable, improved ability to manage the groups, and empowering co-mentors to offer distinct forms of support, but also work together to mutually reinforce key messages or learnings for mentees. Both of these approaches offer a good depth of adult support to the group, but also empower the youth to get to know one another, take on ownership roles, and truly collaborate and bond with one another in the program's activities.



To see how one program promotes both co-mentorship and mentor-staff collaboration, see the profile of one of the Leadership Foundations' programs in the last section of this resource.

Less common are **hybrid group/one-to-one programs** — but this approach also has tremendous potential. These programs make one-to-one matches between mentors and youth, but those dyads participate almost exclusively in group activities. These programs are often called “family-style” programs as they often involve a communal meal or formal gathering.^{1,2} This approach can be helpful for youth who need the personal attention and connection of a one-to-one relationship, but who would also benefit from some robust peer interactions and collective experiences.

Team mentoring models are those in which groups of mentors are intentionally selected based on their specific skills, backgrounds, and other criteria. For example, a school-based mentoring program where the mentoring groups are led by a volunteer tutor, a classroom teacher, a counselor, and a youth development specialist working together to provide specific forms of support collaboratively. Other examples could include mentors, teachers, community members, and clinicians working together to offer a “web of support” to a youth recovering from trauma or a mental health crisis, or, to borrow an example from this project’s Working Group, the combination of a teacher, a college student, and a leader from the business community working together with groups of 10–12 middle schoolers in the LA Team Mentoring program (see [page XX](#) for more information on how this program intentionally builds its mentor and youth “teams”). These team programs can offer youth access to targeted forms of support and mentors with specific lived experiences³ and, when done well, combine mentor strengths into

a comprehensive support structure that can uniquely meet the needs of each youth in the group.

Practitioners will want to think carefully about which group structure is the best fit to meet the needs of their mentees. Youth who need a more personal touch and a simpler group experience may thrive in a small group with one mentor. Co-mentoring may be a safer structure in terms of meeting consistency and group management, but it also requires more recruitment and more support of mentors, who now must work collaboratively with another adult. Hybrid and team models offer really intensive support, but may not allow for the small group bonding and the rich peer-to-peer engagement of more traditional group structures. There is no right answer, but this decision influences everything the program does subsequently and should be carefully considered.

Set limits around group size and composition.

One of the most common questions practitioners ask about group mentoring is around the optimal mentor-youth ratio for the groups these programs make. Our literature search uncovered a wide variety of group sizes and configurations with the most common configurations being one mentor working with 4–10 youth or two mentors working with 8–12 youth. But there was considerable variety, including models where three mentors worked with 12 youth⁴, one mentor (in this case a teacher) working with a group of 15 students,⁵ four peer mentors serving a group of 10 youth in a group skills program,⁶ and even four mentors working with 50-plus youth in an after-school program⁷ that emphasized mentoring interactions. On average, the programs that reported a specific number of mentors and youth in their model averaged out to 6.4 youth per one mentor in the group and an average group size of 12 total youth.

What remains elusive in terms of that practitioner question is whether there is an “ideal” ratio. While that ideal has not been clearly identified in the research, and likely depends heavily on the goals and activities of the program, there is an emerging sense among researchers and practitioners that somewhere around **four-to-five mentees for every adult mentor** in the group is a bit of a “sweet spot” in terms of a ratio. There are several reasons for this:

- It's easier for mentors to manage the groups in terms of behavior and keeping youth on task during activities
- It allows for more interpersonal interaction among the youth and makes it harder for some youth to “hide” in a larger group.
- It may be easier to build a sense of community and belonging with a smaller “unit.”
- A wide range of activities is likely more accessible as a smaller group that needs fewer resources, physical space, and coordination and logistical planning by adults
- Project-based work may be easier and more efficient with a smaller group

Of course, smaller group “units” have their challenges (e.g., if one member leaves prematurely, it is felt very keenly in a small group). But if the theory of change of the program is mainly driven by the youth participants interacting with one another, bonding with one another, and building a unique experience with the support of their mentor(s), then it logically follows that there is likely volume of support needed to keep the group focused, conflict-free, and empowered to work together. A mentor who has to contain and focus a larger number of youth may struggle with the practical realities of that group size.

This reality also suggests an upper limit on total group size regardless of the number of mentors in the mix — and that might actually be a larger concern here. Large groups, meaning groups of more than a dozen or so youth, can have participation challenges no matter how many adults are there to mentor or support the work. Larger groups allow some youth to check out, for cliques and subgroups to form, and for a variety of other issues to creep into the overall cohesion of the group.

However, there may be some circumstances where a larger group is perfect for the program — for example, a sports-based program where you need to field enough players to form teams and play a match and there is adequate physical space for the larger groups to do their work in. Once again, there is no one-size-fits-all answer to these issues. Programs should carefully consider both overall group size and the adult-youth ratio, as either of these can be misaligned with what the program wants to achieve or the realities of their meeting space.

While this question has not been tested explicitly in the research literature, it's worth noting that secondary analysis⁸ from one prominent study⁹ of a school-based group mentoring program found that group cohesion began to wane when the group size exceeded the one-to-four or five ratio suggested here. The experience level of mentors and the behavioral issues of the youth in the groups will be important factors to consider when ultimately determining appropriate group size. Clearly there is a range of ratios and configurations that can work in practice — but there is likely a “sweet spot” for the specific work a program wants their groups to do and for maximizing the pool of available mentors.

The importance of structured activities, with flexibility.

Group mentoring programs should be built around a robust **activity curriculum** that guides the content and structure of group interactions over the course of the program. In looking through the literature on group mentoring, we did not see any examples of programs where the meetings were completely freeform, although there were programs where groups could choose a la carte from a wide variety of activities at a school or program site. But for the most part, these programs are highly structured and often provide daily or weekly activity options and materials.

The types of activities offered by a program will vary depending on program goals and other factors, but in general, group activities should reflect these characteristics:

- **Emphasize active involvement and interaction for all group participants** – This ensures that each participant is getting the same experience and the same opportunities to learn, reflect, and grow.
- **Build on prior activities or further elaborate a theme related to program goals** – Many programs use a sequential curriculum that allows youth to use new skills or knowledge and move on to increasingly complex interactions and lessons.
- **Offer opportunities for honest reflection and open, safe sharing** – This is what puts the “mentoring” in group mentoring. This work is what allows youth to truly be in a relationship with one another and to open up and share their authentic selves.
- **Role plays or other scenario-based opportunities to practice new skills or behaviors** – A small, trusted group environment — with the support of adult mentors — offers an ideal space for youth to try out something new or practice a new way of acting or being. These activities, and the feedback of peers during them, can ground the lessons of the program in the day-to-day world of the mentees.
- **Facilitate knowledge-acquisition and skill-building** – In addition to mentor and peer support, group mentoring programs can also offer a chance to simply teach content or provide information to youth. We found examples of programs using groups to teach sexual health information, coping skills, and other relevant content to youth in these group mentoring settings, using the mentor to guide discussions, answer group questions, and help mentees clarify values or choose a path of action.
- **Allow youth to lead and take some ownership of the activities** – Activities should be as youth-led as possible so that they are empowered to collaborate with one another, stretch themselves in meaningful ways, and feel an organic sense of ownership and belonging to the group.
- **Promote group cohesion and the development of positive group culture** – This concept might very well be the crux of making group mentoring work. Is the group a true group? Have these youth bonded with one another and their mentors to make something more than the sum of their individual relationships? Is there a sense of community and togetherness? Of shared ownership? The activities a program offers should emphasize the ways in which the mentees build something new together in a collaborative, collective experience.



There is, however, another thread that runs through the literature on group mentoring: the importance of flexibility in how and when that curriculum is delivered. One of the original developers of the Project Arrive program that was part of this project's Working Group emphasized the concept of "curriculum with creativity" for their work.¹⁰ The idea is simple: mentors must be attuned to the needs and moods of their groups from meeting to meeting and realize that there are times when rigidly adhering to the weekly activity is not in the best interests of the group. This can include situations where the group is distracted with an issue at school or in the community, when too many group members are absent from a meeting, or when there is some other pressing concern that indicates that deviating from the curriculum might be the best thing for that particular day. This can also apply to instances where the group is stuck on an issue or problem, the curriculum feels redundant or prior work by the group, or there are events in the mentees' lives that require more immediate attention and support from mentors. This creative deviation from the set activities can also include modifying an activity, in terms of scope or how it's accomplished, in the name of making sure that mentees are able to have a positive engagement.

Obviously, deviating from a set curriculum can sound less than optimal to practitioners, and it's always possible to give groups so much freedom of choice that they fail to complete the full program or avoid more challenging activities that might offer the most potential for growth. But both practitioner wisdom and common sense dictates that there should be some malleability to the programming, which is why group programs are encouraged to build scheduling flexibility and some open time into the flow of their program. This may allow for some "wiggle room" to get activities completed and give

Strategies for Adding Flexibility to Structured Group Mentoring Programs

- Intentionally schedule group meetings to include both a curricular activity and time for informal interaction.
- Have curricular themes for each session but allow for a menu of activities that mentors/mentees can choose from.
- Plan the program over time so that structured activities/curriculum early in the year give way to greater youth control/decision-making over time. One example could be to choose activities that correspond with Tuckman's stages of group development (e.g., develop listening skills and conflict-resolution skills when a group is in the "storming stage" and goal-setting and team-work skills when in "norming stage," etc.).
- Schedule curriculum-focused days interspersed through the program.
- Set parameters around flexibility/ability to deviate from curriculum — e.g., specify the essential versus optional/adaptable components of a curriculum in order to maintain fidelity to key elements.

the groups some much needed time to innovate, take breaks, or shift focus as needed. Sometimes, deviating just a bit from the rigid structure of a program leads to gains and growth in group cohesion and other areas that make the trade-off worth it. See the sidebar for some of the creative ways we noticed programs trying to offer both



structured interactions and this needed flexibility. You can also see an example of how the Clubhouse Network’s programs try to find balance between structured time and flexible meetings in the last section of this resource.

Plan for access to resources, physical space, and supplies.

Because group mentoring programs are so activity-driven — and also tend to be housed at a site like a school, nonprofit center, or other institution — they must emphasize the logistical planning around use of physical space and resources. Among the common challenges noted in both the research and by our Working Group members were the challenges of ensuring a proper physical space, and adequate privacy, for groups to meet and in acquiring access to the equipment and materials needed to do group activities. If the program is housed in a “host” site like a school, a Memorandum of Understanding or other binding document can help clarify agreements around access to space and resources. The bottom line is that mentors and their groups need access to facilities, tools, materials, equipment, and other infrastructure that is needed for conducting program activities.

Empowering groups to develop their own norms, rituals, and customs.

Given that creating a sense of group ownership and community is one of the main goals of group mentoring programs, practitioners are encouraged to think about how they can encourage groups to develop their own customs, rituals, and group rules. This can include everything from a common greeting or opening icebreaker to their meetings, a set of rules around confidentiality and handling conflict, or even rituals on how they celebrate accomplishments by group members.

Of particular importance are the rules around how the group will make decisions (e.g., unanimous agreement versus taking turns choosing versus majority vote, etc.) and how the group will deal with violations of its agreed-upon rules. Both of these elements will help establish a sense of group identity and will facilitate mentee trust-building with their mentors and their fellow peers. The more these types of elements can be collectively created and agreed on with maximum buy-in, the better.

These types of meeting structures and rituals allow groups to create a positive culture and to work out conflicts productively. Groups are encouraged to work together early in the program cycle to establish these idiosyncratic norms and rituals. These will bring consistency and stronger rapport to the group over time if they are agreed on and adhered to. They can also provide some of the fun and silly moments that make being part of a group so enjoyable.

You can learn more about how the members of our Working Group encourage their mentoring groups to set norms, rituals, and rules in the final section of this resource.

Anticipate some common group mentoring challenges.

Program developers should give thought to how they will mitigate **common challenges** for group mentoring models, such as:

- **Ensuring that each group has a relatively similar experience** even though each group is somewhat unique and will evolve at their own pace and in idiosyncratic ways. If your groups are having wildly different experiences, it may be challenging to achieve the program’s goals with consistency.

- **Ensuring that all youth get a relatively similar level of engagement, interaction, and participation.** Shy youth or youth who are less comfortable in groups can easily be pushed to the side by more boisterous, confident, or naturally social mentees, and their mentors will need to pay close attention to who is not participating fully and who is dominating the spotlight. Ideally, each member of the group will get the same level of adult and peer support, but this can only really happen if the mentors and staff are encouraging full participation and making sure to check in with every child about their experience in the group. This does not mean that all youth have to participate in every single activity equally — in fact it can be really harmful to shy youth or youth who have experienced trauma if they are forced to share in group conversations if they are not ready. In these situations, mentors should find other ways for youth to be engaged and be part of the group even if they aren't comfortable speaking up in a particular moment. But the main idea here is that the program will struggle to give each youth the mentoring experience they deserve if participation varies considerably and nonparticipation in activities is the norm.

- **Determining how to meet youth's individual needs** while participating in a group experience. Some youth may benefit more from a closer one-to-one mentoring relationship as it can be hard for all youth to get their specific needs addressed in a group format. Think carefully about which youth can get their individual needs met through a group approach. Some youth might be better off being referred to a one-to-one model or other service (see Recommendation 19 below). But in most programs, mentors can provide extra support to youth in their group by offering one-on-one time to talk before or after the group sessions or

at some other time that allows for extra support beyond the group. Some programs also promote good staff-mentor communication in order to determine which youth might need more supports than the mentoring program alone can provide. See the great example of how Project Arrive handles this by using social workers as program coordinators in the last section of this resource.

- **Managing group dynamics.** Mentors will need considerable skills and support to keep groups on task, relatively free of conflict, and functioning well through all of the stages of group development. In fact, Tuckman's stages of group development¹¹ (forming, storming, norming, performing, adjourning) may offer a useful framework for thinking about the group over the program cycle. But mentors will always need to be keeping an eye on the interplay between mentees and ensuring strong group cohesion.



Emphasize belonging and safety for mentees.

If there were two themes that echoed across the literature on group mentoring, that most spoke to the power of these programs to intervene in the lives of youth and build something positive, it is the twin goals of **belonging** and **safety** above all else. These two characteristics of effective groups — mentees feeling a sense of belonging combined with a sense that this is a safe place for them — are at the heart of almost every example of effective group mentoring programs we examined. These two principles are cited extensively in the research, both as outcomes in their own right and as precursors to other, more distal outcomes (e.g., improved behavior or peer relationships). Other common group traits found in the (mostly qualitative) research on group mentoring include:

- The group as a place that offers *unconditional support* to members
- The group allowing participants to *normalize their experiences* by comparing and contrasting with those of their peers
- The group as a place to *build identity and autonomy*, while also building mutuality and acceptance with others
- The group as a *place to learn*
- The group as *feeling like a family*

There is no cookie-cutter model to building an effective group mentoring program, but programs that attended to the concepts of belonging and participant safety, and the other factors mentioned here, seemed most successful in creating an environment in which the bigger goals of the program could be met. Practitioners, funders, and other stakeholders are encouraged to think through these types of design considerations and then test to see if these types of design features are impactful as part of regular program evaluation.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Note: The structure presented below uses the original language from the Elements of Effective Practice (4th Edition) as the framework for making additional group mentoring recommendations. Readers should be aware that some of that language may need to be modified to reference a group model rather than the implied one-to-one model. Group mentoring programs can find their specific recommendations in the colored, numbered Recommendations throughout the FRAMEWORK BELOW.

STANDARD 1 – RECRUITMENT

BENCHMARKS:

Mentor Recruitment

B.1.1 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits (to society, the company, and to mentees), practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring in the program.

1. Group Recommendation: Program recruits mentors who express an interest in developing a supportive, caring relationship and friendship with more than one mentee, as well as the potential for co-mentoring with other adults in programs using that configuration.

2. Group Recommendation: Program communicates to prospective mentors that in addition to mentoring one or more youth, they may also be facilitating activities with their mentee(s).

3. Group Recommendation: Program describes the extent to which mentors can expect support from their fellow mentors in the program and the extent to which mentors are expected to provide support to one another.

4. Group Recommendation: Program communicates to prospective mentors that they will likely have a diverse group of mentees and that establishing a close, supportive relationship may be easier to do with some youth than others.

B.1.2 Program utilizes recruitment strategies that build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring.

5. Group Recommendation: Program uses recruitment messages that communicate to mentors that they have the opportunity to positively impact more lives through being a group mentor than an individual mentor.

B.1.3 Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.

6. Group Recommendation: Program prioritizes the recruitment of individuals who have education, employment, or training in:

- group facilitation skills with youth
- empathic listening
- strong social skills
- implementing a curriculum with fidelity, when relevant

7. Group Recommendation: Program prioritizes recruiting members of nontraditional, underrepresented, and minority groups to match the diversity of youth served and to support program goals around diversity, inclusion, belonging, and safety, as relevant.

8. Group Recommendation: If relevant to youth needs and program goals, program may consider using a “team” mentoring model, in which it recruits mentors with specific professional expertise and relevant skill sets and backgrounds who are then grouped with other mentors to serve together as a team working with a mentee or group of mentees.

B.1.4 Program encourages mentors to assist with recruitment efforts by providing them with resources to ask individuals they know, who meet the eligibility criteria of the program, to be a mentor.

B.1.5 Program trains and encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate mentors for themselves, when relevant.



Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

B.1.6 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.

9. Group Recommendation: Program conveys benefits of the group experience when recruiting mentees.

10. Group Recommendation: Program communicates to parents or caregivers that their child will participate in a group mentoring relationship with one or more mentors as well as one or more peers.

11. Group Recommendation: Program communicates to parents or caregivers how mentors and youth group members in the program are screened, matched, and monitored.

12. Group Recommendation: Program describes how mentees are expected to participate fully in the program and in their group's relationships, conversations, and activities, so that youth and families can set realistic expectations and assess their fit with the program.

B.1.7 Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program.

13. Group Recommendation: Program recruits mentees who express interest in developing a close, supportive relationship with a mentor (or mentors, depending on the program structure) as well as with one or more peers.

14. Group Recommendation: Program provides information to referring agencies/institutions so that they are aware of what type of young people will be best served by the program and how they will benefit from the group model.

ENHANCEMENTS Mentor Recruitment

E.1.1 Program communicates to mentors about how mentoring and volunteering can benefit them.

E.1.2 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.

E.1.3 Program uses multiple strategies to recruit mentors (e.g., direct ask, social media, traditional methods of mass communication, presentations, referrals) on an ongoing basis.

Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

E.1.4 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentees in its program.

E.1.5 Program encourages mentees to recruit other peers to be mentees whose needs match the services offered by the program, when relevant.

STANDARD 2 – SCREENING

BENCHMARKS: Mentor Screening

B.2.1 Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.

15. Group Recommendation: Program should consider screening prospective mentors for education or training in:

- group facilitation skills with youth
- empathic listening
- strong social skills
- implementing a curriculum with fidelity, when relevant



16. Group Recommendation: Program should consider screening prospective mentors for having positive relationships with diverse colleagues in the workplace, friends, or family members.

B.2.2 Prospective mentors complete a written application that includes questions designed to help assess their safety and suitability for mentoring a youth.

B.2.3 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

B.2.4 Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on prospective adult mentors, including searching a national criminal records database, along with sex offender and child abuse registries and, when relevant, driving records.

B.2.5 Program conducts reference check interviews with multiple adults who know an applicant (ideally, both personal and professional references) that include questions to help assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

B.2.6 Prospective mentors agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or a minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

17. Group Recommendation: Prospective mentors agree to mentoring more than one mentee.

18. Group Recommendation: Program should assess during the screening process whether prospective mentors may have scheduling challenges or conflicts that would hinder their full attendance at group meetings, and screen out those who may be unable to consistently meet with their group of mentees.

B.2.7 Prospective mentors agree in writing to participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentees that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by their mentoring program.

Mentee Screening

B.2.8 Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.

19. Group Recommendation: Program should assess if prospective mentees would benefit specifically from being in a group program with peers or if an exclusively adult mentoring relationship or some other intervention might be a better fit.

20. Group Recommendation: Program should specify the criteria for determining that youth have the ability to fully and positively participate in the program's group relationships, activities, and discussions (e.g., behavioral expectations, requisite skills, or circumstances, etc.).



B.2.9 Parent(s)/guardian(s) complete an application or referral form.

B.2.10 Parent(s)/guardian(s) provide informed permission for their child to participate.

B.2.11 Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or the minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

B.2.12 Parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing that mentees participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by the mentoring program.

ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Screening

E.2.1 Program utilizes national, fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks.

E.2.2 Program conducts at least one home visit of each prospective mentor, especially when the match may be meeting in the mentor's home.

E.2.3 Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults living in the home of prospective mentors, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries, when the match may meet in mentors' homes.

E.2.4 School-based programs assess mentors' interest in maintaining contact with their mentees during the summer months (following the close of the academic school year) and offer assistance to matches in maintaining contact.

E.2.5 Programs that utilize adult mentors prioritize accepting mentor applicants who are older than college-age.

E.2.6 Program uses evidence-based screening tools and practices to identify individuals who have attitudes and beliefs that support safe and effective mentoring relationships.

Mentee Screening

E.2.7 Mentees complete an application (either written or verbally).

E.2.8 Mentees provide written assent agreeing to participate in their mentoring program.

STANDARD 3 – TRAINING

BENCHMARKS

Mentor Training

B.3.1 Program provides a minimum of two hours of pre-match, in-person, mentor training.

21. Group Recommendation: Because of the increased training demands on group mentors to learn about group facilitation skills, as well as potentially about how to facilitate activities using a curriculum, pre-match mentor training should extend beyond the minimum of two hours generally recommended. While the exact length of training will vary from program to program, group programs heavy on complex activities and skill-building work may offer upward of four hours of pre-match training to mentors, as an example.

B.3.2 Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics:

a. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing, being late to meetings, and match termination).

22. Strategies for beginning and ending each group meeting.

b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentee, parent or guardian, and the mentoring relationship.

c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles.

23. If there is more than one mentor in a group, training on group co-facilitation skills, including how the mentors' partnership will work, planning and leading activities together, building relationships individually and together, conflict resolution, sending consistent messages, and developing shared goals and methods.

24. Strategies for sharing power with group members so that the groups are youth-led as much as possible.

25. Rapport and team-building activities and rituals to use at every group meeting to build group cohesiveness.

26. Delivering session content/activities with fidelity and at a high quality, especially in programs that are building specific youth skills or focused on sequential activities.

27. Working with program staff to refer youth to additional programs, services, and supports to address needs beyond what the mentoring program can provide.

28. Clarifying roles and responsibilities of program staff, including which circumstances and situations should be handled by program staff or liaisons and when mentors are empowered to address situations on their own.

d. Relationship development and maintenance.

29. Strategies for treating all mentees equitably and developing close, effective relationships with all group members.

30. Strategies for encouraging all group members to participate in discussions and activities, and feel that they all belong in the group.

31. Strategies for handling negative group dynamics (e.g., cliques, conflicts, scapegoating, nonparticipation, etc.).

32. Strategies for group decision-making, handling disagreements, and handling disruptions to group activities or conversations.

e. Ethical and safety issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship (see also B.3.3).

f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.

33. How to communicate with the group if one mentee leaves the group prematurely.

34. How to communicate about and plan for the ending of the full group.

35. Understanding the potential negative impact of mentors quitting groups prematurely.



g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.

h. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of youth (e.g., children with an incarcerated parent, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.

36. The importance of taking a strengths-based approach that emphasizes how the positive peer culture of a group can be used to meet the specific needs and goals of the population served.

37. Group facilitation and management skills, particularly recognizing the potential negative impact of “deviant peer training” and other antisocial behaviors on group members, and strategies for keeping those behaviors in check.

i. Initiating the mentoring relationship.

38. Strategies for initiating the group involving Stages of group process and implications of these group stages for developing close, supportive mentoring relationships.

j. Developing an effective, positive relationship with mentee’s family, if relevant.

B.3.3 Program provides pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

- a. Appropriate physical contact
- b. Contact with mentoring program (e.g., who to contact, when to contact)
- c. Relationship monitoring requirements (e.g., response time, frequency, schedule)
- d. Approved activities

e. Mandatory reporting requirements associated with suspected child abuse or neglect, and suicidality and homicidality

f. Confidentiality and anonymity

40. Group Recommendation: Program emphasizes the increased complexity of confidentiality in group settings, especially in mentee training, and encourages groups to address confidentiality in their ground rules.

- g. Digital and social media use
- h. Overnight visits and out of town travel
- i. Money spent on mentee and mentoring activities
- j. Transportation
- k. Emergency and crisis situation procedures
- l. Health and medical care
- m. Discipline
- n. Substance use
- o. Firearms and weapons
- p. Inclusion of others in match meetings (e.g., siblings, mentee’s friends)
- q. Photo and image use
- r. Evaluation and use of data
- s. Grievance procedures
- t. Other program relevant topics

B.3.4 Program uses training practices and materials that are informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated.



ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Training

E.3.1 Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more.

- 41. Group Recommendation: Program may have new mentors shadow seasoned mentor(s) or meet previous mentors and be able to ask them questions.

E.3.2 Program addresses the following post-match training topics:

- a. How developmental functioning may affect the mentoring relationship
- b. How culture, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and other demographic characteristics of the mentor and mentee may affect the mentoring relationship

- 42. Cultural factors and how culture might influence the functioning of the group.

- c. Topics tailored to the needs and characteristics of the mentee
- d. Closure procedures

- 43. Group Recommendation: Because mentors will be closing relationships with more than one mentee, additional closure skills training is needed on topics such as how to handle the early departure of individual mentors and mentees, as well as communicating and reinforcing rules around mentor-mentee and mentee-mentee contact outside the program after closure.

- 44. Group Recommendation: During times of transition or closure, the program provides mentees with an opportunity to reflect on and share feelings about their relationships with the other youth in the group and with their mentors.

E.3.3 Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability to be a mentor and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

Mentee Training

E.3.4 Program provides training for the mentee on the following topics:

- a. Purpose of mentoring
- b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)
- c. Mentees' goals for mentoring
- d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles

- 45. Group Recommendation: Mentee training should also include their role in helping to establish and maintain group rules, helping to create a group culture, and how to get the most out of a group mentoring experience.

- f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
- g. Initiating the mentoring relationship

- 46. Group Recommendation: Training for mentees should include information that describes the experience of participating in the group, the stages of group development, and the group's rules, goals, and rituals.

- h. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship



E.3.5 Program provides training for the mentee on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

Parent or Guardian Training

E.3.6 Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics:

- a. Purpose of mentoring
- b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, and protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)
 47. **Group Recommendation:** Program also clarifies policies and procedures for handling conflicts between mentees and other disciplinary issues, including who, when, and how to contact staff members.
- c. Parents' and mentees' goals for mentoring
- d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles
- f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
- g. Initiating the mentoring relationship
- h. Developing an effective, working relationship with your child's mentor
- i. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship

E.3.7 Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

STANDARD 4 – MATCHING

BENCHMARKS

B.4.1 Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

48. **Group Recommendation:** If the mentees know each other prior to joining the program, staff should consider the youths' prior history together when assigning them to mentoring groups (e.g., check to see if any participants are bullies or victims of bullying, if youth have "enemies" in the group, or if youth are close friends, and avoid placing these pairs together in the same group).
49. **Group Recommendation:** Program should strive for a good blend of youth backgrounds, experiences, and leadership levels in each group and avoid placing too many youth who exhibit aggressive or other negative behaviors, or who are prone to dysregulation due to trauma exposure, into the same group.
50. **Group Recommendation:** If program assigns more than one mentor to a group, program should consider matching mentors who are diverse with respect to characteristics such as age, race, gender, interpersonal skills, and professional background.
51. **Group Recommendation:** Match mentors who have more experience in a helping profession or managing groups containing one or more youth with behavior problems.



B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.

B.4.3 Program staff member should be on site and/or present during the initial match meeting of the mentor and mentee, and, when relevant, parent or guardian.

B.4.4 Mentor, mentee, a program staff member, and, when relevant, the mentee's parent or guardian, meet in person to sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements (e.g., frequency, intensity and duration of match meetings; roles of each person involved in the mentoring relationship; frequency of contact with program), and risk management policies.

52. Group Recommendation: Program should also include an icebreaker activity so that group members can introduce themselves to one another, discuss the topics that were covered in training, explain mentee's roles in the group context, set ground rules, and discuss goals for the group.

B.4.5 GROUP Co-mentors should be offered an opportunity to get to know each other and discuss their perspectives and skill sets prior to the initial match meeting with their mentees.

ENHANCEMENTS

E.4.1 Programs match mentee with a mentor who is at least three years older than the mentee.

E.4.2 Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another, and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

E.4.3 Program provides an opportunity for the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide feedback about the mentor selected by the program, prior to the initiation meeting.

E.4.4 Initial match meeting occurs at the home of the mentee with the program staff member present, if the mentor will be picking up the mentee at the mentee's home for match meetings.

E.4.5 Program staff member prepares mentor for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentor with background information about prospective mentee; remind mentor of confidentiality; discuss potential opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring proposed mentee).

E.4.6 Program staff member prepares mentee and his or her parents or guardians for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentee and parent(s) with background information about selected mentor; discuss any family rules that should be shared with the mentor; discuss what information family members would like to share with the mentor and when).

E.4.7 GROUP Program may consider having a brief, announced trial period at the beginning of the program during which mentoring program leaders can observe the groups, obtain feedback from group members, and make adjustments in order to create the optimal group composition of both youth and mentors (while avoiding stigmatizing participants or generating negative feelings).



STANDARD 5 – MONITORING AND SUPPORT

BENCHMARKS

B.5.1 Program contacts mentors and mentees at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

53. Group Recommendation: Program staff members should observe each mentor-mentee group periodically, as needed, throughout the program cycle and be prepared to offer substantial support to groups that are struggling with culture or behavioral challenges.

B.5.2 At each mentor monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentors about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure.

54. Group Recommendation: Program staff members should also ask mentors about the stage the group is in, the relationships between mentors who are co-leading a group, and the relationships between mentees in the group.

B.5.3 At each mentee monitoring contact, program should ask mentees about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

55. Group Recommendation: Program staff members should also ask mentees about their relationships with their mentors and other members of the group.

B.5.4 Program follows evidence-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from mentors and mentees about the quality of their mentoring relationships, and uses scientifically tested relationship assessment tools.

56. Group Recommendation: Program periodically assesses group dynamics, co-mentor relationships, mentor-mentee relationships, and mentee-mentee relationships.

B.5.5 Program contacts a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian, or teacher) at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

B.5.6 At each monitoring contact with a responsible adult in the mentee's life, program asks about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

B.5.7 Program regularly assesses all matches to determine if they should be closed or encouraged to continue.

B.5.8 Program documents information about each mentor-mentee meeting including, at a minimum, the date, length, and description of activity completed.

57. Group Recommendation: Mentors should record the activities that their group completed, especially if the activities differ from a preset curriculum, as well as significant conversations among group members, impressions of group dynamics, and information about group relationships.



B.5.9 Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

58. Group Recommendation: Program staff should also provide mentors with meaningful feedback about group outcomes, group development stages, how peer relationships may be affecting youth outcomes, whether the group is stalled at a stage, and strategies for helping the group advance to a new stage.

59. Group Recommendation: Program should have procedures and provide mentors with strategies for integrating new group members after the group has been initiated.

B.5.10 Program provides mentees and parents or guardians with access or referrals to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, available social service referrals) to help families address needs and challenges as they arise.

B.5.11 Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.

B.5.12 Program provides mentors with feedback on a regular basis regarding their mentees' outcomes and the impact of mentoring on their mentees to continuously improve mentee outcomes and encourage mentor retention.

ENHANCEMENTS

E.5.1 Program conducts a minimum of one in-person monitoring and support meeting per year with mentor, mentee, and when relevant, parent or guardian.

E.5.2 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and/or offers information about activities that matches might wish to participate in together.

60. Group Recommendation: Given the complexity of managing a group in addition to establishing mentoring relationships, programs should provide opportunities for all mentors to meet and talk with each other to provide each other with peer support.

E.5.3 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and mentees' families.

E.5.4 Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the mentoring relationship, prior to match closure.

E.5.5 At least once each school or calendar year of the mentoring relationship, program thanks the family or a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., guardian or teacher) and recognizes their contributions in supporting the mentee's engagement in mentoring.

STANDARD 6 - CLOSURE

BENCHMARKS

B.6.1 Program has a procedure to manage anticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

61. Group Recommendation: Program should provide mentors with strategies for closing each meeting with rituals that encourage reflection on the group members' relationships and personal growth and allow each member to say goodbye in ways that mirror the ultimate closure of the group.



62. Group Recommendation: Program should have procedures for managing, and provide mentors with strategies for continuing the group when a mentee or mentor leaves the group prematurely.

63. Group Recommendation: Program should build group closure activities into the curriculum or the last several meetings of the group so that closure can be adequately addressed and youth and mentors have time to reflect and process the group's dissolution.

B.6.2 Program has a procedure to manage unanticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

64. Group Recommendation: Program should provide mentors with strategies and guidelines for discussing any mentee who left the group unexpectedly, with an emphasis on confidentiality and group concerns.

65. Group Recommendation: Program should establish policies and procedures for when premature departures of mentors or youth from one or more groups may necessitate the merging or dissolution of groups or other reconfigurations in the middle of the program cycle.

B.6.3 Program has a procedure to manage closure when one member of the match is unable or unwilling to engage in the closure process.

B.6.4 Program conducts exit interview with mentors and mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians.

B.6.5 Program has a written policy and procedure, when relevant, for managing rematching.

B.6.6 Program documents that closure procedures were followed.

B.6.7 Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentors' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for mentor notifying the mentee and his or her parents, if relevant, far enough in advance of the anticipated closure meeting to provide sufficient time to adequately prepare the mentee for closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant

B.6.8 Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentees' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for notification of mentor, if relevant, about the timing of closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible rematching, if relevant



66. Group Recommendation: Program should offer each group an opportunity to acknowledge the personal growth of each mentee, as well as to reflect on the journey of their entire group and celebrate the experience they created together.

B.6.9 Program has a written public statement to parents or guardians, if relevant, as well as to mentors and mentees that outline the terms of match closure and the policies for mentor/mentee contact after a match ends (e.g., including contacts using digital or social media).

ENHANCEMENTS

E.6.1 At the conclusion of the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship, program explores the opportunity with mentors, mentees, and (when relevant) parents or guardians to continue the match for an additional period of time.

E.6.2 Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees, when relevant, to mark progress and transition or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship.

67. Group Recommendation: Program invites parents, guardians, or others who are important in the life of the mentees to celebration events.

E.6.3 Program staff provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.



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JUSTIFICATION AND DISCUSSION OF MAIN PRACTICE THEMES

THEME 1

Bringing Program Participants Together

The first major theme of this supplement for group mentoring programs are practices relevant to the strategic ways that programs bring participants together who are a good fit for the program and a good match for one another. This theme covers the Recruitment, Screening, and Matching and Initiation Standards of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (4th Ed.). For the most part, the recommended practices add detail and nuance to the existing Benchmarks; including 14 recommendations for Recruitment, six recommendations for Screening, and five recommendations for Matching and Initiation. In the Matching and Initiation Standard, we have added one new Benchmark and one new Enhancement that represent unique practices for group mentoring programs that are not captured in the existing practices of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (4th Ed.). These recommendations are derived primarily from descriptions of group mentoring programs in the research literature and input from the Working Group. It is worth noting that none of these individual practices has been rigorously evaluated, but the authors felt strongly that these represent important practices.

Recommendations for Participant Recruitment and Screening

Like all mentoring programs, group mentoring programs should strive to recruit the right individuals to participate in the program and screen potential mentors to identify those who best fit the program. The program goals, target mentee population, and desired outcomes will inform who is targeted for recruitment, how they are recruited, and how

individuals are screened. In terms of recruiting mentors, there are several key themes among the practices for group mentoring programs, including establishing expectations and mentor characteristics that should be considered for recruitment and screening.

Establishing Expectations During Mentor Recruitment and Screening

The recommended recruitment and screening practices of this supplement highlight several ways in which group mentoring programs can establish realistic expectations for what the group mentoring program experience will be like for mentors. There are three expectations that should be clearly outlined for prospective mentors during recruitment and screening, which are described in greater detail below: expectations relevant to what mentors are committing to do in the program, potential challenges of participating in the program, and supports available to mentors.

Commitment expectations. Fundamental to the establishment of realistic expectations is an accurate understanding of what group mentoring looks like in the context of each unique program. Thus, the first benchmark of the Recruitment Standard describes how mentor recruitment strategies and materials should “realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring in the program.” Following this Benchmark, the first recommendation (**B.1.1 Recommendation 1**) describes the practices of the program and stipulates that mentor recruitment strategies **emphasize that mentors will be working with more than one mentee and may also be co-mentoring** with other mentors. Some individuals, after giving it some thought, may be more interested in working one-on-one with a child, whereas others may feel like mentoring with another adult would be frustrating and would be



more comfortable working independently with a small group. What is important is that programs clearly spell out what this experience will really be like so that prospective mentors can make a good decision about participating.

Group mentoring programs can further **emphasize the fact that mentors will have the opportunity to work with, and potentially have an impact on, the lives of multiple mentees** as a selling point of participation in the program (**B.1.2 Recommendation 5**). Mentoring programs face stiff competition for volunteers and one effective strategy to attract volunteers is to build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring. It has been suggested that group mentoring might be more appealing to individuals who come from a culture with a collectivist worldview, in which the group or family is prioritized over the individual and programs might consider how to effectively appeal to these individuals through recruitment materials that emphasize the group experience and potential impact.¹ For mentoring organizations that offer different types of mentoring programs, such as one-to-one and group mentoring, volunteers who are comfortable with the group approach might find this type of mentoring particularly attractive since they have the potential to interact with more than one mentee without any significant additional time commitment

Another practice that is integral to the model of many group mentoring programs is that mentors spend a lot of their time using and delivering structured activities or a curriculum that program participants complete together during their match meetings.^{2,3} Mentor recruitment materials should **describe the activities they might facilitate with their group of mentees so they know what to expect (B.1.1 Recommendation 2)**. For example, in the *Young Women Leader's* program, which includes both one-to-one mentoring and structured group activities, mentor-mentee groups work through a curriculum together on issues such

as body image, academics, and participate in group rituals such as sharing good and bad things that happened to them during the week.⁴ Some potential mentors might feel more comfortable with the group mentoring experience knowing they will be provided with guidance on the activities they should do with their mentees. In fact, in a study of three group mentoring programs, mentors reported they preferred the group format and structured activities and expressed concerns about the time commitment and perceived greater level of intimacy of one-to-one mentoring relationships.⁵ This could give group mentoring programs an advantage in recruiting mentors who are drawn to this type of mentoring experience.

After establishing time commitment requirements in recruitment, mentor screening practices should rigorously **evaluate if mentors are able to make the commitment to mentoring more than one mentee and the time commitment required** to fully participate in the program (**B.2.6 Recommendation 17 and Recommendation 18**). This can be addressed during the mentor application as well as follow-up discussions during the mentor interview. Screening materials should include specific questions of potential mentors about their schedule and availability, such as work and travel schedules, and potential upcoming life changes that might impact their ability to participate in the group. Mentors should be aware that if they are not able to consistently attend group meetings, then they will be disappointing multiple individuals in their group, including their co-mentor, if applicable. For programs that utilize co-mentors, screening should emphasize for mentors their responsibility to be reliable and consistent in attending the mentoring program to support their co-mentor and that they should not view their co-mentor as someone who can fill in for them when they cannot attend the program.

Expected challenges. Inherent in group mentoring is the involvement of multiple individuals who each have their own goals, personal histories, personalities, and schedules who are working together to establish relationships with one another. One potential challenge of group mentoring that mentors should be made aware of during recruitment is the **need to establish and foster close, supportive relationships with multiple mentees** and that it may be easier to do this with some mentees than others based on personality traits, goals, personal histories, interests, etc. **(B.1.1 Recommendation 4)**. For example, mentors in a group mentoring program for adolescent girls to promote healthy lifestyles reported it was challenging to meet the needs of a diverse group of mentees who ranged in age.⁶ In a study of three group mentoring programs, mentors reported they had closer relationships with some mentees in their group compared to others but most of the youth did not perceive differences in how the mentors treated group members, suggesting that it is feasible for mentors to have effective relationships with multiple mentees without showing preferences to some mentees over others.⁷ However, mentors reported it was challenging to ensure all group members had an equal opportunity to contribute to the group conversations and activities and to find activities of interest to all members of the group.⁸ The intent of this recommendation is not to deter volunteers from the group mentoring experience but to lay the groundwork for realistic expectations and describe the training and support that mentors will receive to help them manage this challenge.

Support expectations. In addition to pointing out challenges and time commitments of mentoring, programs should also realistically portray the supports offered to mentors during recruitment **(B.1.1 Recommendation 3)**. The provision of support for mentors should be included in mentor recruitment materials to foster self-efficacy and establish realistic

expectations for volunteers. Mentors in group mentoring programs report that the support they receive from other mentors is a valuable component of their participation in the program.^{9, 10, 11} For example, in an evaluation of the Mentor Families group mentoring program, which matches mentor and mentee pairs with other mentor-mentee pairs to form mentor families, mentors reported this configuration fostered strong connections with other mentors and mentees in the group.¹² In fact, mentees have better outcomes when their co-mentors have a positive, supportive relationship with one another.¹³ Group mentoring programs that specifically expect and foster support and connection between mentors should highlight this in their recruitment materials to foster self-efficacy and establish realistic expectations for volunteers.



Mentor Characteristics to Consider When Recruiting and Screening

Identifying the characteristics of individuals who would make the most effective mentors for a given mentoring program is important work to support the overall effectiveness of the program, promote the development of strong mentoring relationships, and improve efficiency in the recruitment and screening process. When developing recruitment and screening criteria, programs should begin with the goals of the

program and the target audience who is being served by the program and develop policies and procedures informed by the goals and target mentees. There are several specific recommendations for group mentoring programs to guide their work regarding who to target when recruiting potential mentors and how to screen potential mentors for inclusion in the program.

- To assist group mentoring programs in identifying mentors who might be more successful in establishing close relationships with diverse mentees, it is recommended that programs **screen mentors to identify those who have positive relationships with diverse colleagues in the workplace, friends, or family members (B.2.1 Recommendation 16)**. Knowing that a potential mentor already has positive relationships with diverse individuals could be a good indicator of their ability to establish positive relationships with two or more mentees who may not share their background, experiences, or interests. There are several strategies group mentoring programs can use to assess the relationships of potential mentors such as including questions in the mentor application and interview about their personal relationships. Reference checks conducted with friends, colleagues, and family members can also provide insight into the potential mentor's relationships.
- To support the development of mentee's feelings of belonging and safety in the group, some programs may want to **target potential mentors who match the diversity of the youth served by the program** to support the relevant program goals regarding diversity, inclusion, belonging and safety (**B.1.3 Recommendation 7**). Based on findings from one study of three group mentoring programs from across the United States, these three programs were more likely to specifically target racial and ethnic

minority youth and serve more African-American youth than one-to-one programs.¹⁴ Thus, group mentoring programs must make a concerted effort to recruit potential mentors who share a history, ethnicity, or background with the target mentees of the program to meet the needs of their program, particularly if a goal of the program is to support the identity development of participating mentees. This recommendation is supported by findings from research on several different types of mentoring, although to our knowledge, matching practices have not been evaluated in group mentoring programs. For example, one study evaluating a one-to-one, workplace mentoring reported that when mentees perceive they are similar to their mentor, they report higher satisfaction, greater contact with their mentor and liking their mentor more compared to mentees who do not perceive they are similar to their mentor.¹⁵ Further, mentees in this program who were paired with mentors who were similar in terms of gender and race also reported greater perceived career support and liking their mentor compared to mentees paired with a different race mentor.¹⁶ Efforts to recruit mentors who have similar backgrounds and experiences to the mentees in the program may support greater group cohesion in the group, which is important for the overall success of group mentoring relationships.

- Given the added complexity of group mentoring, programs that use this approach should **prioritize recruiting and screening mentors who have additional education, employment, or training in the skills that will help support the establishment of close relationships among all members of the group (B.1.3 Recommendation 6; B.2.1 Recommendation 15)**. There are four key skills that should be emphasized in recruitment and screening: 1) group facilitation skills with youth, 2) empathic listening skills, 3) social skills, and when



relevant, 4) skills in implementing a curriculum with fidelity. These skills are recommended to increase the likelihood that mentors will start with a strong foundation in their capacity to foster mentee's feelings of belonging, safety and comfort in the group mentoring program. The importance of these feelings among mentees are emphasized in much of literature on group mentoring as a critical component to achieving the desired outcomes.^{17, 18, 19} For example, mentees in a small, high school group mentoring program reported that comfort, nonacademic support, academic support, and safety were the primary benefits of the group mentoring experience.²⁰ In addition, for programs that include structured activities or a curriculum, it is key for mentors to understand the importance of fidelity and consistency to the planned activities. In one study of a group mentoring program that included a curriculum, implementation fidelity was reported as a significant challenge during the program and in fact the impact of the program on mentee outcomes varied based on the attendance of group members and progression through the curriculum.²¹ Mentors do not necessarily have to be experts in these skills to volunteer in a group mentoring program. However, group mentoring programs should consider where they can recruit mentors who are more likely to possess these skills. Programs should also consider what messages to include in their recruitment materials that would highlight the importance of these skills for mentors in the program. When designing screening policies and procedures, group mentoring programs should include questions on application forms and interview procedures to assess these skills. The importance of these skills is described in more detail in the second theme on training mentors.

- Finally, if a group mentoring program has chosen to take a team approach to mentoring, then recruitment strategies should **target potential volunteers who have the professional expertise, relevant skill sets, and backgrounds that are needed to create a complementary team of mentors (B.1.3 Recommendation 8)**. For example, a group mentoring program that has a goal of fostering STEM interests and goals in mentees may determine it is important for the mentoring teams to have a diverse array of STEM professionals and should identify mentor recruitment strategies that will help support the creation of diverse teams. Some recommended strategies include partnering with businesses or other organizations that have a large pool of diverse individuals who could work together as mentor teams.

For programs looking for more guidance around screening of group mentors, please see the tips provided by the National Urban League in the next section.

Recruitment and Screening of Mentees and Parents

Mentee and parent recruitment in group mentoring programs also requires some additional considerations. To help prepare mentees and parents for the group mentoring experience, the recruitment materials and strategies should **accurately describe the unique benefits of the group mentoring experience** such as the opportunity to benefit from the relationship with one or more mentors as well as developing relationships with peers **(B.1.6 Recommendation 9)**.^{22, 23, 24} With multiple people involved in a group mentoring relationship, if a mentee does not have a particularly close relationship with one mentor, they may have formed close relationships with another mentor or other mentees in the group.²⁵





One unique approach to mentee recruitment entails recruiting youth based on their interests and the things they would like to learn about or achieve through the mentoring relationships. In these programs, youth essentially establish their goals for the mentoring relationship from the beginning and the program staff then recruit mentors who have expertise or experience in the types of things that the mentees are interested in learning about or achieving.

Obviously, many programs start with some overarching, program-driven goals in mind for participating youth, but this approach to mentee recruitment gets automatic buy-in from youth because they set the agenda for the mentoring groups from the very start. This is one approach to mentee recruitment that might appeal to certain programs.

Recruitment materials should **clearly describe to mentees and parents how the groups are configured (B.1.6 Recommendation 10), how matches are made, how the mentoring relationships are monitored throughout the program so they know what to expect,** and are aware of program rules and procedures **(B.1.6 Recommendation 11)**. For example, if mentees who are already close friends are purposely not matched together in a group, then that should be stated up front to potential program participants to avoid any disappointment or surprises during the

matching process. This can be accomplished through an FAQ document, for example, or documentation on the program website for potential mentees. See the final section of this resource for additional tips that can help set the expectations for youth applicants during recruitment.

Information on **how mentees are expected to participate in the group relationship and which youth would most likely benefit from the group mentoring experience** should also be integrated into the recruitment and screening policies and procedures **(B.1.6 Recommendation 12; B.1.7 Recommendation 13 and Recommendation 14; B.2.8 Recommendation 19; B.2.8 Recommendation 20)**. Some research suggests that group mentoring relationships are not as intense as one-to-one mentoring relationships;²⁶ however, all members of the group are typically expected to contribute to the group conversations and activities. For mentees who struggle with lower levels of communication and trust or anxiety in group settings, then group mentoring might offer a context for expanding one's peer networks, deepening relationships with existing peers, and promoting self-regulation.²⁷ Group mentoring can benefit youth who are demonstrating behavioral issues^{28, 29} but mentoring programs should ensure they can adequately support the youth who are demonstrating behavioral issues and perhaps refer those they can't support to more appropriate services.^{30, 31} Clear criteria for accepting mentees who can best be served by the group mentoring program will support effective and efficient recruitment and screening of mentees. These criteria should also be clearly communicated to any agencies or institutions that refer youth to the program so they are well-positioned to refer the most appropriate youth.



Creating Effective Matches

Group mentoring programs have a complex task when it comes to making matches between program participants. In addition to the mentor and mentee characteristics that should be considered for any mentoring relationship, which are outlined in Benchmark B.4.1, group mentoring programs have several additional considerations.

- First, when assigning mentees to a group, the relationship histories and existing connections of all mentees in the group should be assessed and taken into consideration to **avoid grouping together participants with a history of negative interactions (B.4.1 Recommendation 48)**. The concern is that pre-existing negative relationships between program participants could significantly impede the development of positive group dynamics and interfere with the goals of the group mentoring experience. In addition, if a primary goal of the program is to help mentees establish new peer relationships, programs may consider not matching close friends in the same group.
- Another important concern for group mentoring programs is to **minimize matching mentees who have a history of demonstrating aggressive, delinquent, or dysregulated behaviors (B.4.1 Recommendation 49)**. Research from the field of child and adolescent group psychotherapy has documented that groups are less effective when they include only antisocial youth compared to groups with a mix of youth who do and do not have a history of antisocial behavior.³² This builds on the growing body of literature documenting the benefits of mixing groups of young people who are demonstrating antisocial behaviors with young people who do not display these behaviors to support the development of social skills.³³ For mentoring groups that do include mentees with a

history of antisocial behavior, the program should **prioritize matching these groups with mentors who have more experience with managing groups or working with youth with behavior problems (B.4.1 Recommendation 51)**. For example, individuals who have been previously trained in this topic or who work in a profession that has provided experience working with this population of youth may be more successful in keeping a group with several youth with behavioral challenges on task.

- Finally, in terms of mentor characteristics that should be considered when matching in group programs, if the mentoring relationships include more than one mentor in a group, programs should **strive for mentor diversity** in terms of age, race, gender, interpersonal skills, professional background, experiences, knowledge, skills, etc. **(B.4.1 Recommendation 50)**. This increases the opportunity for mentees in the group to find a mentor that they connect with in terms of shared backgrounds and interests.

Initiation of Group Mentoring Relationships

Once group mentoring matches are made, then begins the process of introducing all of the group members and officially kicking off the group mentoring experience. The initial meeting between mentoring group members will begin to set the tone for the group and all members should be properly prepared for the initiation of the relationship during orientation and training. If a group mentoring program includes a co-mentoring approach, it is recommended that the program **create an opportunity for co-mentors to meet and get to know one another before their first meeting with mentees (B.4.5 GROUP)**. As described above, youth in mentoring relationships with co-mentors have better outcomes when their co-mentors have a positive, supportive relationship.³⁴ This new benchmark, unique to group mentoring

programs, stipulates that group mentoring programs allow co-mentors an opportunity to get to know one another and lay the foundation for a positive working relationship. It can take time for co-mentors to establish this kind of relationship and this arrangement does present its own challenges such as differences in experience, personality, and approach.³⁵ This meeting could occur during mentor training or after training as a separate meeting that is facilitated by the mentoring program staff. Co-mentors could also be provided with materials by the program to guide their introductions to one another, mutually agree on goals for the group, discuss their relevant skills and perspectives on mentoring with one another.

To facilitate the process of creating group cohesion, familiarity, and comfort, group mentoring programs should **provide guidance for group members leading icebreaker activities to introduce themselves to one another, clarify roles, establish ground rules, and set goals for the group (B.4.4 Recommendation 52)**, allowing all members of the group an opportunity to contribute. These practices create positive rapport among group members and are associated with closer mentoring relationships.³⁶ Activities that help program participants identify what they have in common can establish important rituals for the group, which can further support group cohesion.³⁷

Finally, programs should **consider having a brief trial period at the beginning of the program during which mentoring program leaders can observe the groups, obtain feedback from group members, and adjust for the most optimal group composition (E.4.7 GROUP)**. If programs choose to take this approach, it must be done thoughtfully. Before forming groups, it must be communicated to all program participants that there will be a set amount of time at the beginning of the program that will allow for everyone to get to know one another and that changes to the groups might be

made based on expressed preferences and interests of the participants. Both mentors and mentees should be privately asked about their feelings of comfort with their group and whether their group assignment is meeting their needs and goals. If group assignments are modified at the beginning of the program, program staff must ensure that this is done in a way that is sensitive to the feelings of all the group members in order to avoid feelings of shame at being singled out and moved to a different group, regardless of the reasons for this decision.

THEME 2

Preparing Groups for Success

Preparing mentors and mentees in group programs for the experience that awaits them is predicated on effective and tailored training experiences for everyone involved in the group mentoring program, and is considered to be fundamental to successful match and youth outcomes. As in any type of mentoring program, mentors, mentees, and parents or guardians need not only an orientation to the specific requirements of their program, but also robust training on what to expect from a group-based approach to mentoring relationships, which are inherently more complex than the traditional one-to-one forms of mentoring. All of the pre-existing Benchmark practices that are relevant to pre-match preparation that are outlined in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (4th Ed.) are still relevant to group mentoring. In addition to these Benchmarks, we have added 27 training recommendations for group mentoring programs. These recommendations are specifically tailored to the needs, challenges, and unique aspects of preparing group members to participate in a positive, rewarding, growth-enhancing experience.



Some consistent themes for pre-match preparation emerged from reviewing the literature; however, there were few empirical studies that directly tested training and preparation experiences. Thus, many recommendations in this section emerged out of discussions with Working Group members or descriptions of group mentoring programs in the literature.

The minimum duration of pre-match mentor training needs to be increased.

The first training benchmark (**B.3.1 Recommendation 21**) addresses the required minimum duration for pre-match training of mentors and defines it as being two hours. However, for group mentors, all Working Group members universally agreed and all the literature we reviewed supported the fact that two hours of pre-match mentor training is insufficient to address all the topics needed for mentors to be prepared and effective in this role. The length of time spent in training mentors was not uniformly mentioned in the articles on group mentoring, and when it was mentioned, we found that it ranged greatly across programs and studies. The wide variety of training lengths found in the literature reflected the wide diversity across programs in their goals, and the knowledge and experience of the mentors they recruited. For example, one evidence-based group mentoring program, Project Arrive, had all mentors attend a four-hour pre-match training.³⁸ Several other programs, including the Go Girls! Program³⁹ and a sports-based youth development mentorship after-school program in Hong Kong, China,⁴⁰ required mentors to attend a full-day training workshop. In another training model, Campus Corps required 20 hours of training in a service-learning course, as well as one-hour pre- and post-group supervision sessions after each weekly mentoring meeting where college student mentors discussed issues with their mentees that arose during the session and practiced applying

new knowledge they learned in their course (e.g., on topics such as adolescent development, using strength-based approaches) to their mentees and their mentoring relationships.⁴¹

At the longer end of the spectrum of required training, the Youth Development Program required college mentors to attend one-half day of training plus attend a one-semester course as well as attend weekly supervision during the period of their mentorship,⁴² and the Young Women Leaders Program required college mentors to attend a two-semester course as well as regular match support meetings.^{43, 44} These few examples of experiential learning college courses that included a practicum experience of serving as a group mentor occurred both pre-match as well as concurrently with their mentoring experience. Thus, no consensus emerged as to the ideal length of time for pre-match group mentor training and it appears that the length is, at least partially, dependent upon the goals, methods, requirements, mentee and mentor characteristics, and desired outcomes of the group mentoring program.

Training should reflect that mentors are building relationships with, and impacting, more than one mentee.



Although it is obvious, by definition, group mentors will be having an impact on more than one child, and heightening mentor's awareness of this fact is an important topic to include in pre-match training. Traditional pre-match mentor training helps mentors to learn skills for developing a close, positive relationship with a single mentee. In addition to those core skills, group mentors must also learn how to multiply their efforts and expand their skills across more than one mentee to be able to develop close, positive, effective relationships with each of their mentees (**B.3.2.d Recommendation 29**). Mentors have reported that it can be challenging to try to meet the needs of a diverse group of mentees, especially if their mentees vary by age.⁴⁵ Similarly, mentors will likely need training on supporting activity completion by mentees who have different levels of ability and background. Thus, training on developmental and individual differences issues related to mentoring may be needed for mentors working with groups of mentees who are different ages and have different levels of experience or ability in a particular topic area.

In addition, mentors need training on the potential pitfalls or issues that may arise when trying to even-handedly pay attention to more than one mentee during a group mentoring session. Some examples of topics noted in group mentoring contexts include mentees or mentors being distracted from meaningful conversations by peers' comments or disruptive behavior, mentees being jealous of one another, or attempts at connecting with one or more mentees and how that might interfere with mentees relationships with one another.⁴⁶

Furthermore, all pre-match mentor training is expected to include information about the positive impact of mentoring on youth as well as the potentially negative impact of premature closure on youth. In a group program, when a mentor leaves

early, it will impact all of the mentees in the group, not just one mentee, and can make it very challenging, if not impossible, for the group to be re-matched and develop a trusting bond with a new mentor (**B.3.2.f Recommendation 35**). Thus, addressing the need to make a commitment, look ahead at any major life events or travel needs, or anything else that may interfere with fulfilling their commitment should be included in pre-match training.

Group mentoring requires learning group facilitation skills.

The most important recommendations for training potential group mentors have to do with preparing them to facilitate the group meetings while also managing group processes. Successfully accomplishing these multiple, simultaneous, interpersonal demands can be challenging for mentors, who may feel ill-equipped to competently deal with group dynamics such as group decision-making and handling negative interpersonal relationships between group members, while they are also trying to develop close, supportive relationships with each of the mentees in their group. In addition to these skills of developing relationships with multiple mentees, the fact that the mentees are also developing relationships with one another presents an additional layer to managing the group dynamics. Learning how to manage group dynamics is also needed, since most group mentoring programs utilize some type of curriculum or activity plan, and interpersonal dynamics need to be managed to complete the program's activities effectively and with fidelity.⁴⁷

Several attitudes in mentors have been found to be critically important for supporting their ability to develop high-quality mentoring relationships, and these attitudes are helpful even when mentoring very high-risk mentees. For example, when mentors



believed that their mentoring program provided them with opportunities to build their group facilitation skills (e.g., they can learn skills such as how to resolve conflicts peacefully), they had higher quality mentoring relationships.⁴⁸ Similarly, mentors have reported that they valued when their mentoring program helped them develop skills to manage multiple students in a group simultaneously, particularly when the students varied in their ability levels.⁴⁹ These studies suggest that it is important for group mentoring programs to communicate well to mentors letting them know that they will provide them with relevant and sufficient levels of training, so that they will learn the skills they need to know in order to be efficacious in their role as a group mentor.

A variety of training topics need to be included in mentor training for mentors to feel prepared and be efficacious in this complex role. Learning group facilitation skills, particularly group leadership skills, is a novel goal in the core mentor training field, but mastering these skills is clearly integral to effectively mentoring a group of mentees. For example, training on both interpersonal (e.g., conflict management, identifying strengths in mentees, meeting facilitation) and intrapersonal (e.g., time management, stress management, emotion regulation, adaptability) skills has been implemented by several STEM group-mentoring programs to support positive outcomes in mentees.^{50, 51} In order for mentors to implement this wide array of interpersonal skills well and with consistency, they will need more than pre-match training. They will need ongoing support or supervision⁵² — this topic is addressed more thoroughly in the next theme in this section.

SEVERAL GROUP FACILITATION SKILLS NEEDED BY GROUP MENTORS AS NOTED IN THE LITERATURE ARE STATED BELOW:



Encouraging Participation and Creating a Sense of Belonging

Group mentors must encourage all mentees to participate in discussions and activities, and communicate with group members in a way that helps each person feel like they belong in the group (**B.3.2.d Recommendation 30**). These skills are in the service of trying to establish group cohesion, mutual help, and a positive group climate, while being sensitive to the level of engagement and conflict in the group.⁵³ Group cohesion and climate have been shown to have many positive effects on mentees including an increased sense of school belonging, higher grades, more involvement at home, greater self-efficacy and self-awareness, and improved peer relationships.^{54, 55} ⁵⁶ Thus, supporting and building group cohesion and a supportive group climate serves as central goals for mentors across the life of their group.



Understanding and Utilizing Stages of Group Development

In order to facilitate a group of youth, mentors would benefit from learning about the common stages of group development. Learning about the prevalent model, Tuckman's stages of group development (i.e., Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing, Adjourning), can help mentors understand what is happening with their group over time and the fact that group cohesion takes time to develop.⁵⁷

Learning about the initial stage, the polite “forming” stage of group development presents opportunities for initiating the relationship, prior to the potentially more tumultuous “storming” stage, when the group may experience some conflict and engage in limit testing with the group's leader (**B.3.2.i**



Recommendation 39). Because the “storming” stage is commonly observed in groups, training could help normalize this experience for group mentors. They can be trained to be comfortable with minor degrees of group conflict that may be experienced after the “forming” stage, and with the fact that some conflict does not necessarily mean that there is something seriously wrong with their group or their group facilitation skills. Furthermore, minor levels of conflict do not mean that specific group members need to be moved to another group. Training can also help mentors to be patient with their group process unfolding over time, to allow enough time to transpire for the group to grow beyond the “storming” stage to enter the next stage, the “norming” stage.

One innovative application of Tuckman’s model to group mentoring found in the literature involved training mentors to develop activities for their groups that matched the group’s stage. In this example, the program staff suggested that during the “performing” stage, mentors lead activities that have the goal of improving the problem-solving skills of mentees.⁵⁸ Thus, in addition to training on the stages of development of mentoring relationships with an individual mentee, understanding how to form relationships and manage the group as a whole will be an important topic for pre-match training for group mentors.



Sharing Power and Handling Conflict

Standard pre-match mentor training includes learning about the importance of and strategies for sharing power with a single mentee. This involves sharing a leadership role and having a decision-making process. Training for group mentors needs to extend this training to learning strategies for defining roles and sharing decision-making power among a group of people. Group mentors who are effective in their role

are essentially group members, who join the group in completing activities and having conversations, and are not designated as the group leaders. In fact, this leadership role can be shared among the group members. Thus, mentors need to learn strategies for encouraging mentees to participate in the decision-making process,^{59, 60} while remaining flexible over time. Establishing roles for groups members that are fluid across sessions can prevent having one person consistently serve in one role such as the group leader, secretary, or other role, and not having the opportunity to experience and practice being in other roles. For example, Project Arrive brings all the groups together at the end of the school year to do an all-day ropes course together.⁶¹ Mentors participate in the activities along with their mentees, so it is an example of how mentors are group members rather than being in charge of running or facilitating the group meeting.

These are important skills to learn, since mentors may believe that it might be easier and faster to make decisions unilaterally (**B.3.2.c Recommendation 24**), and by making decisions for the group, mentors can undermine their mentees’ self-determination, self-esteem, intrinsic motivation, and perceived self-efficacy, which are important by-products of caring relationships with supportive adults.^{62, 63} Making healthy, collaborative decisions can be disrupted by the group having poor decision-making procedures; thus, mentors would benefit from training on how to support the group by using good decision-making methods, as well as on how to handle disagreements among group members, when they happen (**B.3.2.d Recommendation 32**).



Handling Negative Group Dynamics

Mentors need to learn strategies for handling negative behaviors and interpersonal issues among group members (**B.3.2.d Recommendation 31**). For example,



groups are at risk for developing cliques or subgroups that can result in excluding one or more group members. This process can result in scapegoating, discrimination, or disengagement, and consequently, low satisfaction with the mentoring experience.^{64, 65} In addition, one or more group members may be extremely shy or withdrawn, and this type of mentee could easily avoid participating in group discussion or activities. A mentee exhibiting this type of behavior is at risk for victimization or being ostracized by the group. Helping groups to be harmonious and helping group members to get along with one another may be critical skills for mentors to learn to keep their group from breaking apart or disbanding.



Establishing a Positive Peer Culture

The beginning stages of the group are important for setting the scene for testing and establishing the expectations of group members and the relationships among all parties involved. Training mentors to adopt a strengths-based perspective toward their group members will contribute to establishing a positive peer culture and building assets in mentees (**B.3.2.h Recommendation 36**). One way to facilitate the development of a positive peer culture is to train mentors to be aware of relationally aggressive behaviors such as peer exclusion and negative gossip, that are potentially destructive group processes. In addition to how recognizing when a group member is being excluded or left out is critical, mentors can learn how to enhance inclusion of an ostracized group member. Some specific strategies include purposely and intentionally facilitating, enforcing, and modeling positive peer relationships.⁶⁶ In this way, mentors can be trained to turn this type of social situation into a teachable moment, thereby, modeling and creating a safe space and climate for their group members to interact with one another.⁶⁷ Other strategies for building a safe space and positive

peer culture is to establish ground rules for the group that include the importance of confidentiality (**B.3.3.f Recommendation 40**) and providing mutual help to one another.



Managing Deviant Behavior and Promoting Prosocial Goals

When group mentoring programs focus recruitment efforts on providing mentoring to primarily at risk youth, mentors and staff need additional, special training on identifying signs that one or more group members may be having a negative effect on their peers.⁶⁸ In other words, youth tend to imitate one another, especially if the group rewards the behavior of a member by smiling, laughing, or agreeing with a story or action. Even in a mentoring program that is focused on building prosocial behavior, these “war” stories may be shared and how to respond when they happen is key.⁶⁹ When this story or action is unhealthy, risky, or illegal, it can begin a process of deviancy training. In other words, one or more group members can “train” their peers to behave in deviant rather than prosocial ways. The iatrogenic effects of group interventions outside of mentoring that include youth who exhibit antisocial behavior are well-established and managing the negative influence of these behaviors exhibited during group meetings on peers can be very challenging, even for highly supervised and trained mental health clinicians.⁷⁰

Helping mentors to be aware of group processes that reinforce deviant or unhealthy (e.g., delinquent, aggressive, substance using) behaviors, how deviant behavior in the group influences group members, and strategies for managing the group to not imitate those behaviors should be an integral part of pre-match training (**B.3.2.h Recommendation 37**). Mentors can also be trained to directly address antisocial or negative peer relations with a corrective action to deescalate the negative process occurring among



group members and potentially promote prosocial contagion instead.^{71,72} Notably, high levels of structure and supervision in the group not only help to support the creation of a group identity, but also reduce violent and counter-normative behaviors in youth groups.⁷³

Another way that negative peer relations is manifested in group meetings is when a group member is disruptive while a peer or mentor is talking, or while the group is participating in an activity together. Training on how to handle these types of situations can serve multiple goals (**B.3.2.d Recommendation 32**). By managing low-level disruptive or opposition behavior as part of general group facilitation skills training, mentors can support the development and maintenance of a positive peer culture, while minimizing the likelihood of deviant peer processes from taking root in the group.

Co-facilitating a group presents new challenges and training needs.

Many group mentoring programs utilize a model where two or more mentors work together with one group of mentees. Mentors may find this model particularly attractive, because they can share management of the mentees in the group and facilitating activities with one another. Notably, when co-mentors have a supportive working relationship with one another, it is associated with better outcomes in mentees.⁷⁴ In addition, mentors report being supported by one another in a peer supervision context, as well as comforted and relieved by having immediate and ongoing access to these additional resources.⁷⁵ In fact, some mentors have even reported that they did not want to be a group mentor, because they thought it would be too challenging to manage group dynamics, especially on their own.⁷⁶

Despite many advantages to co-mentoring, it presents its own challenges. In addition to establishing

group identity, meaningful relationships with each mentee, working relationships with the program staff members, and maintaining smooth group processes, mentors who co-facilitate groups also need to establish good working relationships with each other and have sufficient time to do so.⁷⁷ Some mentors have reported that it takes months to learn how to co-lead a group with a peer and that participation in weekly post-group processing sessions were helpful to support this process.⁷⁸ One suggestion is for co-mentors to have time to get to know one another before launching the program.⁷⁹

Co-mentors need to understand and learn how to develop a partnership, resolve conflict, send consistent messages, and shared goals and methods of co-facilitation (**B.3.2.c Recommendation 23**). As discussed in the Program Planning and Design section, group mentoring has many advantages for the co-mentors themselves, including providing them with expanded opportunities for networking with others and having meaningful conversations with diverse peers.⁸⁰ Co-mentoring also has advantages for mentees by being able to experience and see the strengths and weaknesses of more than one mentor.⁸¹

Initiating relationships with and among a group of mentees requires special skills.

Mentors can benefit from learning strategies for how to initiate their group (**B.3.2 Recommendation 22**) including beginning to develop a rapport with their mentees, helping their mentees get to know one another, setting the group rules, and beginning to have the group define itself toward building a group identity. Furthermore, for mentees to contribute to the success of the group, they also need training on how they can contribute to establishing the group's rules, goals, and rituals (**E.3.4.h Recommendation 46**). In one example of a group mentoring program serving youth involved in the juvenile justice system,

mentees contributed to setting group rules in the first session.⁸² Furthermore, the structure, conversations, and activities conducted during the first group meeting can be pivotal for beginning to build a sense of belonging in mentees and connectedness with one another.⁸³ Notably, in a qualitative study of adolescents' experiences in the Go Girls! program in Canada, most of the girls interviewed talked about a sense of belonging in the group, the building of strong bonds, and feeling that they were building lifelong relationships.⁸⁴ One way that group mentors can help to create a welcoming environment is to learn strategies for involving all group members in conversations and activities at the first meeting, so that each member leaves feeling that they are an integral part of the group (**B.3.2.i Recommendation 38**). The first meeting can set the stage for future relationships among mentees; hence, mentors want to be sure that each mentee has a voice at the first as well as at subsequent meetings.

Mentees may be more used to one-to-one types of mentoring or helping relationships with caring adults where they are the center of attention and where their needs take precedence over the needs of peers. The group mentoring context does require mentees to share the limelight with each other, so to speak; but with this reduction in focused attention comes other benefits, such as developing supportive relationships with a diverse group of peers. Because of the unique nature of this model of mentoring, pre-match training for mentees about group mentoring is important to help them understand their role and how they can get the most out of the group mentoring experience (**E.3.4.e Recommendation 45**).

Group rituals, rules, and norms help to build a group identity.

One strategy for building a strong alliance to the group is by building a strong positive, group identity

(**B.3.2.c Recommendation 25**). The building of strong group identity can be facilitated, particularly for youth who are still learning about themselves in relationship to others, through the group being well-defined; the group having clear boundaries; there being shared goals among group members; the members experiencing the same frequency, intensity, and duration of meetings and a common structure; and the social interactions being primarily positive.⁸⁵ Notably, trained mentors have reported that learning how to facilitate group meetings with the goal of building relationships among all group members and a group identity is important and required specific training.⁸⁶

Further support for reducing group ambiguity comes from findings suggesting that high levels of clarity and appropriate structure are associated with mentoring relationship quality.⁸⁷ In addition, one study found that a key part of building group cohesion was to build collective efficacy; in other words, the group's shared belief in its ability to execute a task or achieve a goal effectively.⁸⁸ These findings suggest that believing in the efficacy of the group may be even more important for performing a task together than believing in one's own personal efficacy.

Practically speaking, mentors should be trained in how to establish their group's rules during the first group meeting, as well as how to build group identity and a sense of collective efficacy over time. In addition, mentors could use training and support on how to develop group rituals, such as having an opening exercise and closing activity at each group meeting, which can help youth to know what to expect. Building group identity and cohesiveness are key goals of sustaining mentors' and mentees' commitment to and satisfaction with their relationship.



Group mentors should coordinate and collaborate with program staff.

Unlike the involvement of program staff in most one-to-one mentoring programs, the program staff in group mentoring programs are typically present during match meetings and may even participate in match activities. This social context makes training mentors on how to coordinate and collaborate with program staff a greater need **(B.3.2.c Recommendation 28)**. For example, there may be some group situations where the mentoring program would prefer that mentors handle group relations and other situations where the program would prefer that the staff intervene. Mentors need to understand the boundaries between what they should and shouldn't do during group meeting and with their group members. Parents can also benefit from training on this topic, so that if they learn of any conflicts or disagreements among group members from their child, they know who to contact and how to contact staff members **(E.3.6.b Recommendation 47)**.

Mentors play an important role of communicating information about the needs of mentees and their family members, if relevant, to the staff at their mentoring program. Training is needed on how to work with the program staff on the needs of their mentees with respect to potential additional program, services, and supports to address needs beyond what the mentoring program can provide **(B.3.2.c Recommendation 27)**.

Group models offer unique opportunities for mentors to get mentored.

Most mentoring programs require that mentors attend in-person, instructor-led training workshops and/or complete online, web-based, or mobile training courses; however, group mentoring provides the opportunity to offer a unique supplement to pre-match mentor training, namely, having new mentors

shadow seasoned mentors while they are leading a group **(E.3.1 Recommendation 41)**. One example is the Reading for Life mentoring program where volunteer mentors shadowed experienced mentors for 12 weeks, in addition to receiving extensive training. The lengthy mentor preparation may have been due to the fact that it was a juvenile diversion program for nonviolent offenders requiring mentors to have more advanced skills and knowledge.⁸⁹ Many mentoring programs have new mentors meet with previous mentors to be able to hear about their experiences and ask them questions about their concerns. All these methods provide an opportunity to both train mentors and observe them to learn more about their training needs and readiness to begin mentoring, as well as to support the development of mentors having realistic expectations.

Cultural backgrounds of mentors and mentees can influence group relations.

The standard benchmark recommendations for mentor training include core cultural awareness training, because mentees may come from different cultural, gender, racial, religious, socioeconomic, or other identity relevant backgrounds than the mentor. Basic training on how cultural background may affect relationship development is multiplied within groups, since not only may the mentees differ from their mentors, but they may also differ from each other. Thus, cultural background may influence group dynamics and development⁹⁰, and mentors could benefit from training on how these cultural factors may be influential and how to address them to establish positive group relations **(E.3.2.b Recommendation 42)**. For example, in Project Arrive, during mentor training, pairs of mentors interview each other about their ethnic identity using an interview protocol developed by Jean Phinney. This activity helped mentors learn interviewing skills, learn about each other, and explore and reflect on their

own ethnic identity.⁹¹ In another example, Pyramid Mentoring, a culturally centered group mentoring model, provides mentors with 20 hours of training related to learning about Afrocentric cultural assets, values, and socialization practices to support healthy identity development in mentees at risk for youth violence.⁹² In general, training topics on cultural awareness and identity will vary across programs, based on the goals, strategies, and composition of the group, as well as the goals and design of the program.

Mentors need training in how to implement the group's activities with fidelity and flexibility.

Many group mentoring programs require mentors to lead preplanned activities or co-lead activities with program staff members. Mentors are not trained or expected to be group therapists, guidance counselors, or psychologists, so facilitating group meetings that solely consist of unstructured conversations can be uncomfortable, unproductive, and even potentially harmful.⁹³ In fact, many group mentoring programs utilize a curriculum that has to be learned and mastered, which can help keep mentees engaged, busy, and learning new skills.

Using a curriculum or preplanned activities can be advantageous to building commitment and engagement in the program, as well as provide the group with structure and direction. It is best done when matches select their activities collaboratively,⁹⁴ and when the conversations and activities address the mentees' goals on issues such as their education, career, and financial status.⁹⁵ In fact, some mentees, especially female mentees,⁹⁶ have reported that engaging in instrumental activities during their group meetings, in addition to more relationship building activities, are important to them and can contribute to positive relationship development in groups.^{97, 98} By using a curriculum, it can provide opportunities to

discuss sensitive topics that otherwise might appear awkward or intrusive for a mentor to initiate on their own.⁹⁹

If the curriculum is an important part of the logic model where the knowledge or skills learned in the curriculum are considered fundamental to impacting mentees, then mentors will need specific training in how to implement the curriculum activities with fidelity (**B.3.2.c Recommendation 26**). Mentors should be provided with tools to help them with learning the goals and instructions for implementing activities such as a comprehensive resource manual with detailed instructions for each activity.¹⁰⁰

Fidelity is important, but so is flexibility. In the Young Women Leaders Program, the curriculum that was used was seen as a valuable resource; however, results from a qualitative study suggest that when it was delivered too rigidly, it was reported to stifle interactions.¹⁰¹ Either way, training on the faithful implementation of a curriculum is needed as well as training on how and when to be flexible regarding curriculum implementation, and together these skills may be critical for achieving positive mentee outcomes.

There are some types of group mentoring programs, such as STEM mentoring programs, where completing group activities requires technical expertise or following a complex set of instructions, which can take mentors attention away from their mentees and building their mentoring relationships. Thus, having program staff help out by leading activities can be advantageous. For example, in the STEM RAYS program, an after-school science club for elementary school students, elementary school teachers facilitated group meetings and were extensively trained in advance by attending a three-day workshop with scientists, who they subsequently met with once a month in order to continue to develop their

subject matter expertise.¹⁰² In the STEM Mentoring Supplement,¹⁰³ it was noted that some STEM mentoring programs ask their paid staff member to lead activities.¹⁰⁴ When staff take on this role, it frees up mentors to be able to focus their attention on their mentees rather than on the activity and how to complete it. Whether the mentoring program is STEM- or curriculum-focused, having staff play a more active role in leading activities can also help mentors share power, leadership roles, and decision-making with their mentees, since their roles are more equivalent in terms of the group process.

Parallel to the practices of some STEM mentoring programs that require mentors to have specific STEM education, skills, or expertise, there are other group mentoring programs that are designed for youth in clinical populations or who have been exposed to traumatic events or include activities on complex topics. In these types of programs, mentors should receive intense training and/or have advanced or specialized degrees. For example, one group mentoring program for preadolescent children receiving both cognitive-behavioral treatment services and group mentoring recruited highly trained undergrad and masters' student mentors who received 24 hours of training in the use of a cognitive-behavioral curriculum.¹⁰⁵ Similarly, in a mutual aid, group-based intervention with a clinical sample of high school student mentees, mentors who facilitated the group meetings were trained, highly experienced school counselors.¹⁰⁶ In a sexual health promotion group mentoring program in Korea, mentors were nursing students who were enrolled in two related courses on health promotion and health education.¹⁰⁷ In the Fostering Healthy Futures program for 9- to 11-year-old children who were recently placed in foster care because of child maltreatment, skills groups and one-to-one mentoring were led by graduate students in social work, who received

course credit for participating in the project.¹⁰⁸ If a mentoring program is serving a vulnerable or specific population, then they need to think carefully about the skills, backgrounds, and educational context that their mentors need to be successful in serving mentees in their program, as well as the skills that can be developed through training and supervisions, once they are on board.

Maintaining confidentiality in group mentoring is important, but can be challenging.

All mentor training is expected to address the importance of maintaining the confidentiality of their mentee; however, this task can become quite complex when mentoring a group of mentees. Mentees may know each other in school and want to talk about what is happening in the group outside of group meetings. Mentees may be active on social media and may post information about each other, their mentor, or their group activities. Although group members may be peers, or in the same age or grade group, they may not be friends outside of the group. Thus, mentees may not be afforded the same freedom of communication about one another or on social media that they may have with a friend. Training mentors to help their mentees think through issues about confidentiality, and the importance of being sensitive to the feelings and privacy of their peers in the group is important¹⁰⁹ **(B.3.3.f Recommendation 40)**. This topic is important for programs to address during orientation, screening, and enrollment, as well as in their written policy communications; and important for mentors to discuss during the first group meeting as well as regularly thereafter.



Relationship closure is a little more complex with a group of mentees.

Just as there are some unique aspects to beginning group mentoring relationships, mentors also need training to close their relationships in supportive, healthy, and positive ways. Closure is challenging for mentors in most one-to-one mentoring relationships; however, with a group mentoring program, these challenges are multiplied by needing to close their mentoring relationship with each mentee, as well as for each mentee to close their relationships with each other.



One way to support the group in preparing for group closure is to train mentors about the value of communicating to the group about when and how the group will end (**B.3.2.f Recommendation 34**). Mentors should talk about it early and often, so that mentees have time to process their feelings about the group ending, as well as have ample time for closure activities and winding things down. This is particularly true for programs that do not follow a school year. Staff and mentors should let everyone know at the beginning of the program when the final date of the program will be. Open communication about closure can prevent mentees from trickling out of the program before the group ends.

Another scenario to cover in training is how to handle the situation when a mentee leaves the group prematurely. In particular, mentors need training on how to communicate with the remaining group members about the group's loss (**B.3.2.f Recommendation 33**).

Programs also need to make policy decisions about how they want to handle communication between mentors and mentees, as well as between mentees with one another, after a group mentoring program ends, and to train mentors in those policies (**E.3.2.d Recommendation 43**).

Traditional training on match closure encourages mentors to reflect with their mentees about their relationship and the impact of mentoring on them. An extension of this practice to group mentoring is a recommendation (**E.3.2.d Recommendation 44**) that mentors give their mentees opportunities to reflect on and share their feelings about their relationships with both their mentors and peers, as well as their impact on them. In a qualitative study, mentees reported that mentors and peers had an impact on different types of outcomes, so that, taken together, having both sources of support proved to have a broader impact than one alone.¹⁰ For example, girls attributed academic changes more to their mentors than to their peers; whereas, girls attributed change in their relationships, such as making friends or helping others, more to their fellow group members than to their mentors. Similarly, in a seminal study of group mentoring, youth who participated in group mentoring programs improved in their relationships with peers as well as in their relationships with other adults, besides their mentor.¹¹

Please see the final section of this resource for more tips on how programs can handle recruitment planning, courtesy of Girls Inc.

THEME 3

Preparing Groups for Success

The third major theme of this Supplement for group mentoring programs involves a set of practices that are designed to help mentoring programs support mentors and mentees in groups. These recommendations broadly include the Monitoring and Support, and Closure Standards of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (4th Ed.). There were eight recommendations added to the Monitoring and Support Standard and eight recommendations added to the Closure Standard. The basis for these recommendations came from a few research studies on group mentoring, as well as from descriptions of group mentoring programs and suggestions from the Working Group.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MATCH MONITORING

Staff can and should be a “fly on the wall” to observe group mentoring sessions.

Mentoring program staff in group mentoring programs can utilize traditional methods of monitoring, such as having regularly scheduled, monthly telephone calls, emails, or texts with mentors, mentees and parents or guardians of mentees. In addition, they can take advantage of the fact that they are present during group meetings, which is a unique opportunity in the mentoring field, such that they can directly observe each mentoring group in the program (**B.5.1 Recommendation 53**). Furthermore, they can observe the groups on multiple occasions over time to watch the unfolding of group processes, development of relationships, and growth of group members. This type of monitoring can be especially helpful in match support conversations in that program staff will have firsthand information that they can share. Given the

complexities inherent in group relationships, staff need to be vigilant and closely monitor the interactions among group members. Otherwise, they may not be aware of issues that could arise that might challenge the effectiveness and longevity of the group.

One danger of relying on self-reports of group members is that they may be biased, exaggerated, or misconstrued, particularly, if the group member does not have a strong understanding of group process issues. With more objective monitoring by program staff, their observations can provide a useful and potentially positive, balanced perspective on interpretations of group processes. For example, during times of stress in a group, such as during the “storming” stage, intragroup conflict may be occurring in ways that mentors do not see and an observing staff person may be able to help guide the group toward greater group cohesion and help them to enter the “norming” stage.¹¹² Another example where direct observation by staff may be important is when there is a shy or withdrawn group member who rarely participates during the group.¹¹³ Mentors may be so busy managing group process and interacting with the other group members that they may not be aware that they have a mentee who is really on the periphery of the group. Staff members can be third-party observers who can help identify and ameliorate these types of situations through a close working relationship with mentors in match support meetings.

For some mentoring programs, there is a regular presence of staff on-site during mentoring meetings¹¹⁴ (e.g., Soccer for Success); however, many programs do not have a standardized observational method or checklist, or even interview protocol that they use to assess and record information about group process. In general, it is not clear how intentional staff members are when they observe group dynamics and processes in most group mentoring programs. It will take training and professional development to help staff members

become proficient observers of group functioning across groups in their program, as well as accurate recorders for documenting key information.

Group mentoring programs should assess the relationships among group members and the functioning of the group as a whole.

Monitoring of mentoring relationships by mentoring programs typically focuses on dyadic relationships; however, group mentoring introduces the need to assess multiple dyadic relationships as well as the overall group process. These additional monitoring needs require the use of special approaches and even specific collection methods and tools that may be unfamiliar to mentoring program staff. In this section, some specific questionnaires used in research are mentioned, which programs can use to formally assess group relationships. (Many of these questionnaires are included in the journal articles or can be located by contacting the authors. In addition, many questionnaires are available in the National Mentoring Resource Center’s Measurement Toolkit.) This review, however, highlights issues to note when observing group meetings and topics to discuss more informally during monitoring meetings.

Assessing group process may require special measures and approaches. In addition to monitoring the typical relationship processes found in one-to-one mentoring programs, namely, each mentor-mentee relationship, program staff in group mentoring programs should also assess three additional qualities of matches, including 1) group dynamics, 2) mentee-mentee relationships, and 3) if present, co-mentor relationships (**B.5.2 Recommendation 54 and B.5.4 Recommendation 56**). The assessment of these three additional aspects of programs will involve the use of a new, special set of measures and approaches.

All of the measures that were located were used

primarily in basic research studies rather than found in descriptions of practices used by individual group mentoring programs. Thus, using measures of group relationships for monitoring and support purposes is still an experimental idea and recommendation, and is not yet supported by research.

Staff need to ask questions on new topics, as part of monitoring group matches. Three special topics need to be addressed in monitoring, including group dynamics and the group experience, co-mentor relationships, and mentee-mentee relationships.

1. Group dynamics and the group experience: (B.5.2 Recommendation 54 and B.5.4 Recommendation 56) Program staff members need to ask mentors about their group climate and relationships, including the stage the group is in (after mentors have been trained in the typical stages of group development); the relationships between mentors who are co-leading a group; and the relationships between mentees in the group.

Despite the voluminous theoretical and clinical therapy literatures on¹¹⁵ model of group development, the theory has never been validated by independent research¹¹⁶ and no questionnaires have been located that assessed group stages in the mentoring context. Thus, although we recommend that programs assess group climate, the field does not yet have a well-validated measure to offer for this purpose. One study was located that included a promising measure of group stages,¹¹⁷ based on the 15-item Group Process questionnaire,¹¹⁸ but it has only been used for research on adults in a group work context. Future research might involve testing and refining this measure. or developing a new measure for use by group mentoring programs with group members to provide more formal insight into the group’s stage of development.

In addition to measuring group dynamics, group experiences can also be monitored by talking with mentors and mentees, or using more formal self-report questionnaires. One set of strong questionnaires assess group characteristics such as **autonomy and relatedness** among group members¹¹⁹ (e.g., 10-item scale) to provide an appraisal of relationship closeness. Similar to ratings of relatedness are ratings of **group cohesion** (such as, “would you ‘hang out’ with members of your group?”) that were shown to improve group performance on specific tasks and can be assessed in a five-item scale.¹²⁰ Similarly, program staff may want to measure mentees’ **sense of belonging** in the group. One measure includes group members’ evaluation of their commitment to, engagement in, and connectedness to the group in a 10-item¹²¹ questionnaire or in a briefer, revised five-item measure.¹²² Alternatively, there is an 11-item, mentee self-report questionnaire of group climate that includes items on connectedness, belonging, mutual help, and engagement that has been found to be related to mentee school-related outcomes¹²³ and relationships with peers,¹²⁴ as well as grades, participation at home, self-efficacy, and self-awareness.¹²⁵ This 11-item Group Cohesion scale, and many other relationship assessment tools, can be found on the National Mentoring Resource Center website: <https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/index.php/learning-opportunities/measurement-guidance-toolkit.html>

2. Co-mentor relationships: When more than one mentor is involved in facilitating a group of mentees, the quality of the relationship between the co-mentors is important to assess (**B.5.2. Recommendation 54 and B.5.4 Recommendation 56**). One questionnaire was located that asked mentors to formally rate how much encouragement and respect they received from their peer mentors

on nine items.¹²⁶ The more co-mentors felt support from each other, the more their mentees reported that they improved, and the more impact this had on mentees’ self-esteem. A simple method for assessing this important relationship is to ask open-ended questions to mentors about how much encouragement and respect they receive from their co-mentor during match support meetings.

3. Mentee-mentee relationships: In addition to the common practice of asking mentees about the relationship with their mentor(s), programs should also ask mentees about their relationships with other mentees in the group (**B.5.3. Recommendation 55**) as well as asking mentors about how the mentees in the group are getting along with one another (**B.5.2. Recommendation 54 and B.5.4 Recommendation 56**). These conversations can be held during match support meetings using open-ended questions about the closeness, support, and conflict between each mentee pair. Unfortunately, for group mentoring programs interested in using a more formal measure of mentee-mentee relationship quality, none were located in the mentoring literature.

The peer relations literature does offer some ideas about ways to assess mentee relationships through using self-report questionnaires of friendship quality that may be applicable in the group mentoring context. For example, the Network of Relationships Inventory,¹²⁷ the Friendship Quality Questionnaire,¹²⁸ and the Friendship Qualities Scale¹²⁹ are all commonly used. All three measures include similar scales on topics such as companionship (spending time and doing fun things together), talking about thoughts and feelings, closeness, and conflict, among others. In addition, mentors can observe how their mentees interact with one another and research suggests that when mentors do spend



time observing the interactions among their mentees, it provides them with important insights into their mentee's social competence.¹³⁰

The group therapy literature is another source that could be helpful for informing mentoring programs about methods that group leaders (i.e., mentors and program staff members) can use to monitor the climate in their group. These measures include assessing aspects of interpersonal relationships including the group structure, the types of verbal interactions occurring in the group, and the emotional climate of the group.^{131, 132} The emotional climate, in particular, is important to assess because the more time people spend in group therapy, the greater their bond with the group; and the greater their alliance to the group, the greater their reduction in symptoms.¹³³ An example of a group engagement measure for group therapy consists of 21 items and assesses five dimensions of group behavior including contributing to the group either verbally or behaviorally, relating to the group leader and other group members, and working on one's own personal and peers' problems,¹³⁴ all of which significantly improve over the life of mutual aid groups.¹³⁵ In another study using a 12-item group climate questionnaire¹³⁶ that assessed engagement, avoidance, and conflict, engagement increased over time and was related to therapeutic outcomes.¹³⁷ Thus, there are several examples in the group therapy literature of the value of assessing group climate, particularly the degree of engagement each member feels toward the other members in their group. Engagement can be more informally assessed by asking mentees questions about things such as how much they enjoy coming to the group and how important it is to them.

Mentors need to record information about group activities and processes, in addition to traditional information about their mentoring relationships.

Mentors need to record the activities that their group completes, especially if the activities differ from a preset curriculum (**B.5.8 Recommendation 57**). In order to track changes in group dynamics, mentors and/or staff members should also record significant conversations among group members, their impressions of group dynamics, and any information about group relationships.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MATCH SUPPORT

Somewhat surprisingly, almost no program descriptions or research articles wrote about either their methods or results of match support practices. We know that when mentors perceive that they receive high levels of program support and opportunities for learning new skills in their program, they have better quality relationships with their mentees than if they did not receive adequate support and post-match training.¹³⁸ Thus, support practices may need to be tailored to the group context to adequately address the unique aspects of group mentors, but the recommendations we have made, for the most part, were derived from logical deductions about the challenges that are faced by group mentors and discussions with the Working Group. Match support is clearly a standard of practice needing attention in terms of ongoing conceptualization and research.

Staff need to support mentors regarding several group issues.

Program staff should provide mentors with meaningful feedback about new topics that are relevant to a group mentoring context (**B.5.9 Recommendation 58**). For example, staff should provide their feedback



and input regarding how the group members get along with one another; the stage of development that the group may be in and its relevance to group activities and relationships; how the relationships between mentees may be affecting youth outcomes; and strategies for helping the group advance to a new stage. At the most basic level, mentors can use support for building group identity such as how to use rapport-building activities, explicitly talk about the importance of group unity, maintaining high expectations for prosocial behavior, and how to create opportunities for mentees to make testimonials or pledges regarding good behavior.¹³⁹

Group mentors may face other challenges related to the relationships between pairs of mentees or the role of individual mentees in the group, such as someone being the victim of relational aggression (e.g., eye rolling when one peer is talking, selective ignoring, exclusion), some being the victim of overt aggression (e.g., insulting), and disengagement (e.g., clique formation, absent or poor communication).¹⁴⁰ Mentors need strategies and support to learn how to manage their group to converting these complex and negative interactions into fun and supportive relationships, to reengage mentees who have become marginalized or withdrawn, and to deal directly with relational aggression and peer rejection. However, they will also need training on knowing when to contact their program staff for support in managing these types of complex and challenging interpersonal situations that may arise in group mentoring **(B.3.2 Recommendation 28)**.

Staff need to support mentors when new mentees enter pre-existing groups.

Group mentoring programs should have policies and procedures addressing when and how to integrate new mentees into a group after it has already started. Furthermore, staff should also provide mentors with

support and strategies for integrating new members into the group, if they enter after the group has completed their first meeting **(B.5.9 Recommendation 59)**. Adding a new mentee in the middle of the life cycle of the group could disrupt the mentees' roles, balance of power, alliance, stage of group development, relationships and individual time with the mentor(s), and other things. The group therapy literature suggests that therapists need to be sensitive to the impact that a new group member may have on an existing group and how to make the new group member feel welcome.¹⁴¹ Mentors could use support during this type of transition to ensure it goes as smoothly as possible.

Staff need to provide co-mentors with opportunities to provide each other with support.

Some group mentoring programs assign more than one mentor to work with a group of mentees. Managing a group with a co-mentor can be both an asset and a challenge. Co-mentors need time and support in figuring out their respective roles and responsibilities, and how they will manage their group process. They will need to support each other as well as receive support from the mentoring program staff **(E.5.2 Recommendation 60)**. In fact, having a supportive working relationship between co-mentors can positively impact youth outcomes.¹⁴² Furthermore, when mentors brainstormed solutions to group issues together, they found it helpful and it contributed to building strong bonds between them.¹⁴³ Program staff can also help mentors to observe how their co-mentors handle different group or dyadic interactions to learn additional strategies for improving their relationships with their mentees.¹⁴⁴



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CLOSURE

No research specifically on match closure practices were located; however, several recommendations emerged from reading the group mentoring literature and discussions with Working Group members regarding special circumstances related to handling both anticipated and unanticipated closures of group mentoring relationships. The recommendations were primarily due to the need to close multiple relationships simultaneously.

Premature closures in groups present the need to create unique program practices.

When a mentor or mentee leaves a group prematurely, programs need to have policies and procedures in place for how to manage this transition, as well as suggestions to mentors for strategies for how to continue the group (**B.6.1 Recommendation 62**). In addition, if a mentee drops out of the group unexpectedly, the program needs to provide mentor(s) with strategies and guidelines for how to discuss this absent mentee (**B.6.2 Recommendation 64**). For example, mentees may need to be reminded about the group rules around confidentiality and keeping the missing mentee's identity and disclosures private. They may also see the mentee who left early in school or in the community, and may need to be reminded to not share information about the group or group members with this person, once their former group member has formally resigned. The group may also have concerns about why a peer quit prematurely and worry that it is a negative reflection on them or their group. When a mentor or mentee drops out of the group, it can leave the remaining group members with unresolved feelings of loss for that person and mentors may need support in helping the group to resolve these feelings.¹⁴⁵ Mentees may need reassurance about the value of their group and mentors may need to spend some time on rebuilding

the group identity, rules, and culture after this type of transition.

If there is more than one mentee who leaves the group, it may make the group too small or too unstable to continue in its present form. Furthermore, if the mentor leaves prematurely and there is no co-mentor, then the group will lack a leader. In either case, the group mentoring program should have pre-existing policies and procedures for handling these situations, as well as when and how to merge or dissolve groups in the middle of a program (**B.6.2 Recommendation 65**).

Staff need to modify their closure policies and procedures for a group mentoring program.

Closure policies and procedures need to reflect the multiple mentoring relationships that simultaneously will close in a mentoring group between each mentor-mentee pair, between each mentee-mentee pair, and potentially also between pairs of mentors.

Staff need more time to prepare the group for closure. If group mentoring programs are using a curriculum, they should build closure activities into the curriculum (**B.6.1 Recommendation 63**). Even if no curriculum is being used, staff should coach mentors to include discussions or closure-related activities into the last several meetings of the group, so that closure can be adequately addressed, and mentors and mentees have adequate time to reflect and process the group's dissolution.

Staff should provide ideas for group closure rituals. Program staff should provide mentors with strategies for closing each group meeting over the life of the group with rituals that encourage mentees to reflect on the group meeting, how the group members relate to one another, and examples of their personal growth during the group meetings (**B.6.1 Recommendation**



61). These brief closure rituals should also allow each group member, including mentor(s), to say goodbye in ways that mirror the ultimate closure of the group. For example, the Girls Circle reports using a closing activity or ritual such as blowing out candles that were lit during the opening ritual, making positive statements about oneself, or stating hopes or wishes, at the end of their group meetings with the goal supporting attitudes of gratitude and respect in their mentees.¹⁴⁶ In these ways, at the last group meeting, mentors and mentees will be familiar with and comfortable directly saying goodbye to one another in a productive and supportive way.

Group closure events should include some additional activities. Group mentoring programs should incorporate several activities into their final closure meeting. First, mentors should be trained to offer each group an opportunity to acknowledge the personal

growth of each mentee (**B.6.8.h Recommendation 66**). These reflections should also address the journey of their entire group over the life of the program as well as a celebration of the experience they created together. Many mentoring programs have closure celebrations that provide opportunities for group members to reflect on their experience and end with positive memories and feelings about their group mentoring experience.¹⁴⁷

Second, the program should consider hosting a community gathering inviting parents, guardians, or others who are important in the life of the mentees to a celebratory closure event (**E.6.2 Recommendation 67**).¹⁴⁸ This can also be done as a type of Rite of Passage ceremony that has proven to be valuable and useful in other mentoring programs.¹⁴⁹



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PRACTICE IN ACTION SNAPSHOTS

This section provides examples of how several programs have implemented many of the recommended practices promoted in this Supplement. These “snapshots” of program practice feature the members of the project’s Working Group explaining how they make these practices come to life in their particular models and the value that their program participants find in adhering to these practices. We hope these serve as meaningful examples that will inspire other programs to carefully plan and implement these critical group mentoring components.

How Soccer for Success Prioritizes Program Evaluation as a Core Program Improvement Practice – U.S. Soccer Foundation

The U.S. Soccer Foundation’s Soccer for Success program uses a variety of evaluation methods to improve and evolve the participant and coach-mentor experience. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) conducted a [study](#) on Soccer for Success in 2015 and determined the program is an effective mentoring program and meets the key benchmarks outlined by MENTOR’s *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*.

In addition to this independent evaluation, Soccer for Success maintains extensive data collection and analysis practices through various staff members, with the primary responsibility vested to the organization’s Program Officer. The program implements pre- and post-testing of health metrics and participant behavioral/knowledge acquisition surveys for each 12-week season and 24-week program year. The program’s coach-mentors are surveyed after their initial seven-hour training and at the end of each season. Each youth participant’s family members are surveyed at the end of each season to assess satisfaction, behavior changes, and program feedback. This data ensures program fidelity and stakeholder satisfaction for sites across the country.

In an effort to gather additional insight, the U.S. Soccer Foundation follows up with implementation partners (i.e., YMCA, Department of Parks and Recreation) when any significant variation of data occurs such as poor retention rates or negative satisfaction surveys. In addition, Soccer for Success uses youth, family, and coach-mentor focus groups and program site visits to gain further understanding into program implementation. Focus groups provide a wonderful feedback loop for curricula, training(s), technical assistance practices, family and community engagement practices, and more. With any new program feature or innovation, such as a new section of training or curriculum, Soccer for Success ensures a review through focus groups of the appropriate stakeholders. Additional data collection and evaluation are considered for any new program feature or innovation as well. Ultimately, the goal is to design and evolve a program that is created and continuously reviewed by community partners to ensure it remains relevant and impactful.



Promoting Co-Mentoring and Strong Mentor-Staff Collaboration in a School-Based Group Model – Leadership Foundations

Knoxville Leadership Foundation’s Amachi after-school group mentoring program focuses on serving youth impacted by incarceration through one-to-one community-based mentoring. Amachi was asked to develop and test a group mentoring model as a component of the after-school program at Dogwood Elementary School in South Knoxville, Tennessee, in 2015. Dogwood Elementary is a participating school in Knox County’s Great Schools Partnership (GSP). GSP — a nonprofit organization that supports Knox County Schools in achieving globally competitive standards — was formed in 2005 to align and coordinate efforts important to local leaders from public and private sectors. As a part of its programming efforts, GSP operates in local schools through an on-site coordinator — this coordinator assists with after-school programming and provides resource referrals to higher need communities of Knoxville. After the initial after-school pilot proved successful, Amachi developed after-school group mentoring programs in eight Knoxville-area schools, serving more than 110 mentees with 28 mentors.

Once Amachi agrees to start an after-school program, the GSP on-site resource coordinator and school staff identify student and school needs, such as underserved age groups or grade levels and activity gaps. Based on the identified needs, Amachi staff and the GSP school coordinator develop themes or focus areas for the groups. Some of the themes include: theater, yoga, nutrition, media and film, outdoor exploration, bike safety, and leadership. Amachi staff members begin to recruit mentors, at least two per mentoring group, who have interests and skills related to the identified themes or mentors who have interests and passions that would be a good fit for the program. Mentors then participate in required training, which is aligned with the Training standard outlined in MENTOR’s *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*. The training encourages mentors to see themselves as an adult role model and friend, rather than a formal teacher. The training also includes topics such as: group facilitation, planning group activities, and cultural competence. Once mentors are recruited and trained, school staff and the GSP on-site coordinator identify and recruit students who are good candidates for the groups (i.e., students who are available to participate in a group mentoring program, interested in the selected topics, and willing to engage in a mentoring relationship).

Amachi has found that a co-mentoring model enables mentors to share the responsibility around activities that they are personally passionate about, create lesson plans, and assist with attendance if one mentor is absent. Amachi uses a one-to-five mentor-to-mentee ratio to help mentors feel less overwhelmed and to ensure space and time to be intentional about the mentoring relationships. Amachi staff holds periodic check-ins with the GSP site coordinator to further identify needs of mentors and the school.



Through the Amachi model, various stakeholders have experienced positive outcomes, including:

- More youth have been reached and served through local schools. Youth are provided with consistent adult role models and have opportunities to build relationships with peers while exposed to new experiences and activities.
- Mentors have options to serve a group of mentees rather than only in one-to-one relationships. The program offers mentors opportunities to build and develop leadership skills and create plans and activities around areas of personal interest and/or experience.
- Parents have shared an increased confidence that their student can remain safe and engaged in a learning community while working on social skills.
- Schools receive additional support to fill program and activity gaps to better serve student needs.

The Amachi after-school group mentoring program helps serve more youth, provide options for mentor engagement with youth, build partnerships with schools, and foster relationships to support mentees in a more holistic manner.



Emphasizing Strong Group Composition in the LA Team Mentoring Model – LA Team Mentoring

Los Angeles Team Mentoring (LATM) targets three distinct mentor types to fulfill its team mentoring model — a teacher from their middle school, a college student studying at a local institution, and a business professional from the community. The school teacher helps to build the student’s connection to academics, the college student promotes a pathway to higher learning, and the community business professional encourages lifelong skill building. This unique team approach increases the potential impact of each mentor three to four times over the traditional one-to-one mentoring approach, while enhancing the interpersonal skills and mutual respect of participants within the relative comfort of a peer team/group setting. LATM aims to recruit a diverse set of mentors with regard to ethnicity, gender, and background. Additional consideration is given to sensitive and responsible candidates who are interested and willing to mentor multiple youth, respect community norms and culture, and have a genuine desire to work with middle school youth. LATM’s approach to mentoring exposes youth to a vast range of perspectives, opportunities, and experiences. One of the greatest strengths of LATM’s team mentoring model is diversity. Student mentees naturally cluster with peer mentees similar to themselves, which can lead to divisions along racial, economic, and gender lines. Creating identity-diverse teams deliberately seeks to confound this disunion.

Student teams consist of 10-12 students per team and are grade-specific in design, meaning there are sixth grade, seventh grade, and eighth grade teams. Grade-specific teams are created to benefit from LATM’s progressive learning curriculum designed to meet the unique developmental needs of each grade level. The central goal when creating student teams is to establish a healthy balance of personality types including positive, outgoing, shy or introverted, “spirited” youth or youth who have a tendency toward trouble. Having each personality type represented on the team allows for distinctive peer-to-peer mentoring experiences between students. Additionally, acute behavioral issues, such as anger, depression, lack of acknowledgment of authority, ADD, etc., as well as the presence of ancillary services (counseling, intervention, and special education), are taken into consideration when matching groups. These additional considerations are given so as to not overwhelm mentors with multiple behavioral challenges on one team.

As previously outlined, **mentor** teams are comprised of three distinct mentor types — a teacher, college student, and business mentor. This combination allows for a four-to-one student-to-mentor ratio, and like student teams, mentor teams are fashioned around personality and leadership style. Additional consideration is given to identity, though leadership style takes priority when forming mentor teams. When it comes to mentors working together, LATM strives for a diverse array of leadership styles and approaches, specifically pairing mentors who are “quiet” with those who are “outgoing.” LATM has observed the combination of the two to have a profound impact on group energy level and youth retention. When well-matched mentors are placed together, students have an enhanced experience and demonstrate investment in group meetings. A healthy balance of leadership styles has a profound effect on the successful communication and facilitation of the LATM curriculum. On a similar note, LATM makes



a concerted effort to avoid mismatching personalities that will compete for power or vie for the attention of mentees. Conversely, the program avoids matching mentors that are shy and reserved. A mentor pair with competing personalities or exceedingly reserved tendencies can lead to negative dynamics among mentees including boredom and apathy.

Overall, the diverse and carefully designed model and curriculum stimulates enthusiasm and intrigue within mentoring groups. Having an intentional group configuration encourages an ideal learning environment that allows participants to hone how they relate to others, reduce alienation amongst peers, foster discovery, and broaden viewpoints, thoughts, and opinions; it reduces misunderstandings around gender bias, sexual orientation, ethnicity and socioeconomic status.



Finding a Balance between Structured Activity and Flexible Time in the Clubhouse Model – Clubhouse Networks

Exploration is at the heart of The Clubhouse Network. When young people enter a Clubhouse, they connect to a world of creative possibility — possibility to produce an album, design clothing, develop a video game, print 3D objects, create jewelry, and so much more. After a structured day at school, the Clubhouse is a place where young people can relax and pursue their interests in their own way and at their own pace. The space is theirs to build, shape, create, and innovate.

Each day when members (The Clubhouse Network’s term for “mentees”) arrive, Clubhouse Coordinators encourage them to follow their passions and experiment with technology — whether it be the 3D printer, recording studio, DJ station, computer software, or another piece of novel tech. There is no set curriculum or structured expectation for how members spend their time. Youth are in the driver’s seat, and mentors serve as partners and peers who learn alongside and collaborate with members. When youth care about what they’re working on, they are willing to work longer and harder, and they learn more in the process.

A member’s interests often evolve as they spend time in the Clubhouse. A member might enter with the desire to create an album, but as they are exposed to more opportunities, the member might create an accompanying music video, album cover, and group T-shirts. Projects can center innovation because members have creative ownership to express themselves. Creations reflect members’ interests and values in a way that is unique to their perspective.

The Clubhouse Network approach leverages novel technologies to support new types of learning experiences and engages young people who have been underserved and, at times, alienated by traditional educational approaches. This exploratory model prompts members to forge their own paths, design a creative process, and make decisions about their project’s execution, allowing for cultivation of meaningful leadership skills. A member can seek guidance as needed, but they’re encouraged to dive into the available technology, try, create, struggle, problem solve, make mistakes, and grow through practice. Members learn immediate success is not as valuable as perseverance, and practice is essential to progress. This approach empowers youth from all backgrounds to become more capable, creative, and confident learners.



Creative Ways of Empowering Groups to Set Their Own Norms, Rituals, and Rules across Several of Our Working Group Programs

We asked the Working Group members of this project how they go about empowering mentors and youth to set group-specific rules and rituals in an effort to empower youth and start building group cohesion. Here is what they had to say:

Project Arrive facilitates a conversation over the course of two-to-three sessions about group purpose, goals, norms, and agreements. Youth are given ample opportunity to voice their interests for the group and what they need/want from mentors and group peers.

Los Angeles Team Mentoring holds three distinctly different orientations for each of its members: the mentees, mentors, and parents. The goal of the mentor and mentee orientations is aligned in their understanding of how the team will function and operate from the start. The parent orientation is essentially facilitated to help with mitigating negative student behavior and garnering parent support when needed. All three orientations are built to ease and transition everyone into a team mindset.

The Clubhouse Network encourages sites to develop group norms at a regular, recurring cadence so new members and mentors are always represented. Clubhouse Coordinators typically include both members and mentors in the development of group norms. Involving all program participants in this process increases feelings of investment and ownership in the resulting norms and ensures everyone's voice is heard. In addition to formal group norms, Clubhouses have a "green table" — a community gathering spot where members, mentors, and staff convene and hang out — which serves as a hub for conversation and fosters a sense of culture and informal group norms. Youth are referred to as

"members" instead of "mentees" to express that everyone is an equal member of the community; everyone has a shared opportunity to contribute to the Clubhouse's culture.

Creating group guidelines/agreements/promises is a standard part of all of **Girls Inc.** programming, including mentoring. The group norms creation process is typically held during the first meeting and facilitated by a program staff member who asks mentors/mentees for their suggestions. The facilitator comes with a set of recommended guidelines that are presented to the group at the end for possible inclusion if not already put forth by the mentors/mentees. At the facilitator's discretion, mentors and mentees may sign the flip chart listing the group guidelines to signify their commitment to follow and uphold them. The flip chart (or poster created by the group or a printed laminated poster) is hung and visible during all mentoring sessions. For off-site special programming and field trips, some groups will re-create their guidelines on a white sheet, on an 8 1/2 x 11 laminated paper, or fold the flip chart paper to bring with them.

For our **Knoxville Leadership Foundation (KLF)** group mentoring model, groups are given the autonomy to establish group norms. During mentor training, discussions take place about how to establish a group culture that allows participants to express their individuality but also allows the group to develop a rapport and a sense of belonging. Belonging manifests as the group develops its own values and/or boundaries; this could include respecting the mentors, peers, and the space they meet in; helping the group members who are younger; not interrupting others; not laughing when someone asks a question. KLF emphasizes the importance of establishing norms for safety, group management, as well as a sense of ownership by each mentee. When mentees have a say in developing group norms, they are more likely to



align themselves and help hold others accountable in the mentoring sessions.

When exploring group norms, **Jerry Sherk** considers a visual exercise called “House Rules.” A mentor draws a simple image of a house on a flip chart and discusses the importance of group rules as a way through which everyone to get along. Anything positive is written inside the house while anything they do not as a norm is written outside the house. If the mentees cannot come up with a full list, the mentor could offer suggestions (e.g., “How about ‘no making fun of others?’”). Near the end of the activity, the mentor adds one last overarching rule that will assist with neutralizing any disruptive behavior.

National Urban League requires youth program participants to complete an Individual College and Career Development Plan (ICCDP). The ICCDP includes baseline data on the mentee’s academic performance, as well as their college aspirations and

career interests. Each plan is used during the group matching stage of the relationship. Mentors serve as advisers to students as they prepare for life after high school. The results from the ICCDP also inform the mentoring program activities. Mentors use their expertise to build a healthy and supportive bridge that the mentee is comfortable crossing because they are interested in learning more from the mentor.

At the beginning of each season, **U.S. Soccer Foundation – Soccer for Success** coach-mentors are guided to create a Team Code with their participants. To create a safe space, coach-mentors devote time during the first week to actively involve participants in creating a clear, fair, and manageable Team Code. A Team Code is made up of three-to-four rules or boundaries that are important to the team. When creating a Team Code, avoid “No” and “Never” whenever possible, focusing on a positive description of the behavior(s) or culture.

The Value of Having Someone with a Social Work Background Working with Mentors to Meet Individual Youth Needs – Project Arrive

The San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) group mentoring program, Project Arrive, serves sixth and ninth grade students who are disengaged from the education system due to systemic inequities, institutional racism, lack of resources/support, and other known factors that negatively impact students' ability to thrive at school. The program seeks to mitigate these factors and to improve attendance, academics, and social engagement during the important transition into middle and high school.

The Project Arrive Mentoring Program was originally developed by School Social Workers to address the challenges related to the transition to high school, especially for students who have early warning indicators for dropping out of school. As a social worker, the program coordinator's training and practical experience in socioemotional learning, therapeutic modalities, and systemic/contextual factors informs a program structure that meets the holistic needs of the students.

A social worker brings a lens of the “whole child” or “person in context”, a perspective that considers how both internal and external factors impact educational engagement and mentoring relationships. A social worker is equipped to develop training and activity curriculum that incorporates assessment, confidentiality, and identity development through a lens that considers trauma/healing, socioemotional skills, and group developmental stages.

The program coordinator regularly consults with Project Arrive facilitators about evidence-based practices around recruitment, screening, training, matching, monitoring, support, and closure. Further, the social worker advises mentors around co-facilitation strategies, student engagement, relationship-building, retention, and more. Overall, a social worker's background lays a strong foundation to provide intentional resources and support throughout all levels of the program.



The Importance of Setting Clear Expectations about Group Mentoring When Recruiting Youth Participants – Jerry Sherk

Preparing mentees to understand the expectations of your group mentoring program is critical to the quality of their experience. When recruiting prospective mentees for a group mentoring program, Jerry recommends covering the following in your mentee orientation:

- Ensure the mentees understand the program is voluntary. Mentees should understand their participation is a commitment as well as an investment.
- Explain what a mentor is and isn't, and what behaviors and actions they can expect from mentors specifically, within this program.
- Review the mission/purpose of the program and how it will benefit the mentees. This review may include the development of relationships with peers and mentors, the ability to share receive support, and the opportunity provide support to peers.
- Sharing will be encouraged, but no one will be forced to participate in sharing.
- Mentees should understand what a group looks like — this could include the number of mentors and mentees in each group or that mentors and mentees will consistently meet in the same groups so relationships can flourish over time.
- Mentees should understand expectation around meeting participation including but now limited to meeting times, meeting duration, meeting frequency, number of mentoring cycles, and length of break time in between mentoring cycles.
- An overview of program activities— group goal-setting, guest speaker presentations, descriptions/ previews of the curriculum.
- Ask mentees topics they would like to see covered during their group mentoring experience.
- Include information about program incentives, such as food, school supplies, and field trips.
- Thoroughly review confidentiality guidelines — ensure mentees know what they share in their group stays in their group with the exception of harm or danger to any mentee in the program or any minors.
- Consider asking prospective mentees to fill out an application and interest form to understand more about their interests and desires to participate in the program.
- Encourage mentees to share the program description with their parents/family members/caregivers; parent/family member/guardian; signed permission forms should be returned to the program.
- Provide ample time for mentees to ask any questions or share any concerns they have about the program and their participation; let them know their parents/family members/guardians can call or email program staff with any additional questions or concerns.



Comprehensive Screening of Group Mentors – National Urban League

The National Urban League (NUL) Project Ready (PR) Mentor program helps students progress academically and intellectually, benefit from enrichment opportunities, and develop important skills, attitudes, and aptitudes that position them well for success during and after their high school years. The program specifically targets 11- to 18-year-old African-Americans and other urban youth who are particularly vulnerable to disengagement from school, community, and the workforce. NUL's programming helps local communities and institutions across the country to develop the internal resources needed to support youth through robust national and local partnerships, including but not limited to:

- Expanding a pool of well-trained mentors
- Intentionally addressing community violence and stressors
- Creating and sustaining meaningful and supportive relationships between caring adults and youth
- Directing relationships toward reducing behaviors that undermine youth well-being
- Building developmental and educational spaces where youth can explore their interests and identity
- Increasing educational and employment success by connecting youth development specialists, mentors, and members of the criminal justice community via positive relationship-building and constructive dialogue.

Prior to matching mentors with mentees, PR requires their local sites to develop a comprehensive mentor screening and onboarding process. The process begins with an informal pre-screening process where youth and staff from the local site interview prospective mentors to determine academic achievements, social skills, and professional backgrounds. Once passed through this stage, the mentor completes an application, an interest survey, a mentor bio, and background check. After the mentor completes these steps, they are interviewed again by staff and encouraged to prepare to become a mentor in the program.

NUL's mandated mentor training — Building the Foundation — is developed by the behavior sciences research company, Innovation Research & Training. The training builds their knowledge and sets expectations for the role, key mentor competencies, and how to engage mentees with a fun, positive attitude. Once the training is completed, mentors are equipped with a clear understanding of their role in the program.

As a final step of the process, mentors must pass a knowledge test. This test — a research and evidence-based tool called Mentoring Central — serves as a pre-matching indicator of a mentor's information synthesis. NUL believes this standard of mentor screening improves the efficacy of their model and enhances the quality of the mentor/mentee relationship



Involving Youth in Planning Meaningful Closing Activities – Girls Inc.

The closing ceremony can be a time for mentees to celebrate their personal experiences and accomplishments and share their talents with parents, program site partners, and community leaders. At Girls Inc., mentees are involved in the shaping and planning of the closing ceremony. While it may be easier and faster for staff to plan closure events, meaningful decisions and leadership opportunities can be offered to mentees when working with them as partners in the closure celebration process.

Mentee leadership development goes beyond selecting snacks, making posters, and hanging decorations. With staff guidance and encouragement, mentees play roles in determining program content, creating the written program, developing the emcee event script, curating a memory video slide deck, and selecting how to show appreciation to their mentors. Mentee creativity has taken various forms including original poetry readings, cheers, hand-crafted gifts, videos, and awards. Each offering recognizes how mentors stepped out of their comfort zone or went above and beyond the expectations of a mentor. Mentees also contribute to the conversations that determine if the closure event will take the shape of a formal ceremony, special event, or field trip.

Girls Inc. staff strive to balance mentees' contributions to the closure process — decision-making, event logistics, and execution — with the need for mentees to participate in closing activities that will provide meaningful closure to the relationships.

Program staff takes into consideration that involving mentees in closing ceremony planning and execution may require working with mentees outside of mentoring sessions. Striking the balance between mentees' involvement in the planning and execution of the closure process and their participation in the closing event is important to the foundation of this approach.

Here are instances that showcase what Girls Inc. program sites have learned from mentee involvement in the closure process:

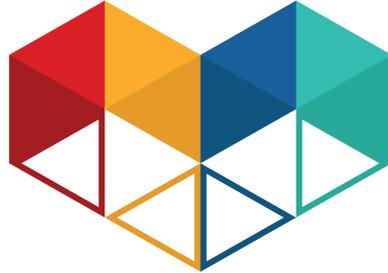
- Girls Inc. of Greater Los Angeles holds a formal ceremony to which parents are invited. In one instance, mentees requested of staff that their families not be included in the celebration event. The mentees shared they wanted the liberty to celebrate freely with their mentors. Staff listened to this feedback and altered the closing ceremony: the first half was for mentees and mentors only and the second half focused on parent participation.
- Girls Inc. of New Hampshire charged each small mentee group with the planning, budget spending, and final execution of one aspect of the closing ceremony. Staff checked in with each group's progress during their mentoring sessions and provided additional support as needed outside of mentoring sessions.



-
- Girls Inc. of Tarrant County combined their closure ceremony with a board-breaking ceremony from their girl-only violence prevention and self-defense programming. Parents were excited to see their daughters participating in something so special to them.
 - At Girls Inc. of Santa Fe, mentees created a presentation for parents, future mentees, and city officials on their community action project – the installation of a crosswalk between their downtown program site and a park.
 - At several sites, mentees requested a special event or field trip as their closing event. Girls Inc. of the Pacific Northwest took mentors and mentees to an amusement park and then hosted a block party for parents upon their return.
 - Girls Inc. of Lynn hosted a family team trivia contest.
 - Girls Inc. of Washington County held a family hands-on STEM challenge. Providing meals and allowing sibling attendance improved parent attendance at closing events.
 - Sites that extend from the school year into the summer chose to hold an end-of-school-year celebration in addition to their final closing celebrations. This was especially effective for sustaining relationships as mentor, mentee, and family schedules evolved. This approach provided an opportunity to highlight program successes to school and other school-year program partners.

While the closing ceremony is a centerpiece of the closure process, mentees worked with their mentors to develop small group closing rituals for each mentoring session. Groups consistently incorporated activities that supported relationship-building and strengthening. Activities consisted of, but were not limited to, celebrating learnings, achievements, risk taking, and attempts; conducting verbal praise circles; writing encouraging notes; and performing a cheer or song the small group created.





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E-MENTORING

SUPPLEMENT TO THE

***ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE
PRACTICE FOR MENTORING***

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MENTOR

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- The members of the E-Mentoring Working Group, who all provided valuable perspectives, expertise, and real-world examples. Readers can learn more about them in the introduction and in the small “snapshots” throughout this guide.
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INTRODUCTION

E-mentoring (sometimes referred to as electronic mentoring, digital mentoring, online mentoring, virtual mentoring, or computer-assisted mentoring) includes any type of mentoring that incorporates a digital technology.

This type of mentoring has grown in popularity over the past couple of decades with the now ubiquitous use of the internet, cell phones, and social media, especially among young people. E-mentoring requires the use of some form of information and communication technology (ICT) and can include sending emails between a mentor and mentee, texting using cell phones, chatting using a messenger program or social media, video conferencing (such as through Skype, FaceTime, or another video call platform), and posting messages to digital bulletin boards or forums. Some programs utilize their own proprietary platforms, often combining many of the features mentioned above, so that mentors and mentees can communicate in a space completely dedicated to their mentoring interaction, while other programs may use readily available technology, or a combination of proprietary and publicly available software platforms.

Programs in which mentors and youth might never have in-person meetings, or even get to know program staff, will likely face some challenges designing and implementing their services that other programs do not experience. But we have also found, through both an examination of the research literature and in the rich conversations with our practice partners on this project, that e-mentoring programs offer some clear advantages over in-person models and may, in theory, be

better positioned to meet the needs of youth with specific challenges or in fostering different types of meaningful adult-youth interactions. These diverse e-mentoring models can connect individuals literally a world apart and offer potentially greater and more frequent access to a variety of different types of mentors. They can also offer some youth safety and participant monitoring capabilities that go beyond what many in-person programs can offer. With technology playing an increasingly important role in everyone's lives, these relationships and e-mentoring models will continue to grow in importance and relevance in the mentoring field.

This supplement is dedicated to recommending additional and enhanced practices beyond those offered in the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* that we believe will help e-mentoring programs design and implement their programs more effectively. We hope that service providers, funders, and other stakeholders find it a valuable resource in their work.

THE MANY FACETS OF E-MENTORING IN ACTION

One of the most important things to recognize about the e-mentoring field is that it is incredibly diverse. These types of programs, while all fitting under that broad e-mentoring label, are defined by many factors that govern how they operate and how and when mentors, staff, and youth interact.

Technology Used

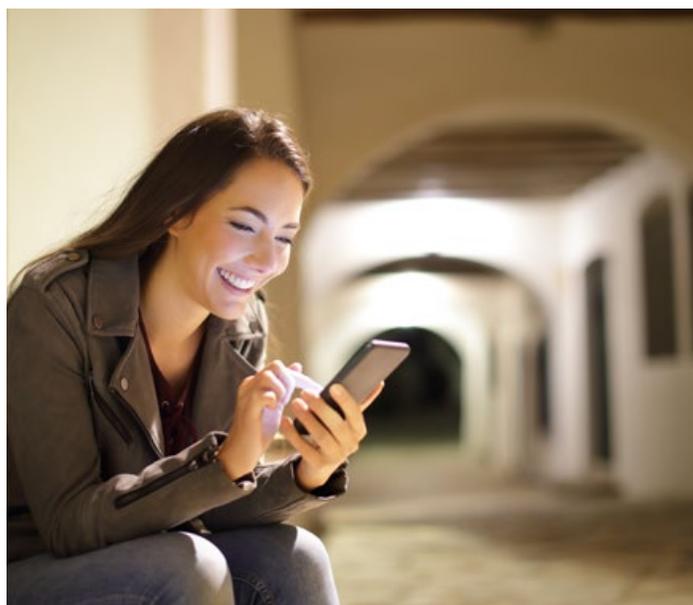
E-mentoring programs often use email, bulletin boards or forums, chat features, or other text-based communication methods. Some use video conferencing platforms (e.g., FaceTime or Google Hangouts), while others offer proprietary software systems that combine many of these features, along with providing customized content such as



suggestions for match activities that are integrated into a single-user platform. Some allow users to select a variety of ways to communicate with one another, while others insist on a single tool or platform. The selection of appropriate digital technology is a major consideration for these programs and is discussed in greater detail later in this resource.

Interaction between Participants

E-mentoring is unique in that the interaction between mentors and mentees can be synchronous, such as when interacting via a video call or chat program, or the communication can be asynchronous, such as through the use of emails or forums where there may be a significant time lag between sending and receiving messages. In fact, some programs do not even have scheduled meeting times, allowing mentors and youth to communicate any time they wish. Others, however, have interactions take place at regularly scheduled times, especially when the program is tied to a classroom setting or time-based project.



E-mentoring programs are also unique in that they provide the flexibility of match meetings occurring entirely through the technology or including some in-person contacts between the mentor and mentee along with technology-assisted interactions. For a great example of a blended program, see the case study of the iMentor program below. Similar to in-person mentoring programs, e-mentoring can utilize a one-to-one mentor/mentee setup, small group format, or even a group of mentors matched to one mentee.

For the purposes of this resource, we are defining e-mentoring programs as those where mentor-mentee interactions primarily (or exclusively) take place using technology. This supplement excludes programs that offer primarily in-person mentoring interactions, but also allow match members to communicate with one another using technology. Our intention here is to offer research-informed recommendations to mentoring programs to support matches where mentors and mentees rarely, if ever, meet in person, which — as one can imagine — greatly changes how the program is designed and implemented.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION:

BLENDING ONLINE AND IN-PERSON MENTORING AT IMENTOR

Mentoring pairs in the iMentor program experience a combination of online and in-person interactions. This approach gives each pair the opportunity to focus both on the goals embedded within the curriculum related to postsecondary success and dynamic, interpersonal relationship development. By utilizing dual communication avenues, iMentor provides mentoring pairs with multiple opportunities to engage in consistent and frequent communication, a central tenet of mentoring best practices.

The online platform affords matches with a space to discuss and reflect, encouraging the development of a more personal relationship. In the beginning of the relationship, pairs are encouraged to share aspects of their lives that provide the opportunity for their mentoring counterpart to learn about their lives more deeply. For example, mentees and mentors write “I am from . . .” poems, where they describe their backgrounds and the elements of their lives that have contributed to the people they are becoming. Through this exercise, mentors have the opportunity to learn more about their mentee’s life and gain insight into the context of the mentoring relationship they are in the process of developing. Mentors then share their own poems, providing their mentees with a new perspective they may not have previously had about their mentor’s life based upon their initial introduction.

The initial online-facilitated sharing of more personal elements of their lives allows mentoring pairs to create a foundation upon which to discuss resonating reflection questions they had when reading their partner’s online content. The in-person connection gives pairs a face-to-face opportunity to reflect on the main learning objectives and to further develop the quality of their relationship. When pairs begin working on the mentee’s socioemotional skill development and/or progress toward completing all the required steps necessary for their postsecondary plans, they will typically communicate online each week at a monthly discussion event. The complementary nature of online and in-person curriculum experiences allow for different learning, communication, and relationship styles to flourish toward achieving targeted outcomes.

Goals of E-Mentoring Programs

E-mentoring programs often have similar program goals to that of traditional in-person mentoring (e.g., to improve academic outcomes). More commonly, e-mentoring programs often target specific circumstances and outcomes that are not easily addressed through traditional in-person mentoring formats. For instance, youth with physical disabilities may not be able to easily meet with a mentor in person; e-mentoring provides an opportunity for

regular meetings without physical barriers,^{1,2,3} and these programs allow them an opportunity to connect with mentors and pursue goals that might have otherwise been unattainable.

E-mentoring also creates the opportunity for the availability and accessibility of mentors who fill certain characteristics, such as sharing a similar skill, interest, or characteristic with a mentee. When certain characteristics are not common in the general population, e-mentoring can help to



connect mentees with similar mentors even if they live far away. An example of this is connecting young people experiencing eating disorders to mentors who have experienced similar challenges through an online forum⁴ or the iPeer2Peer program, which pairs young people living with juvenile idiopathic arthritis with a slightly older youth who is successfully managing the same illness.⁵

Some e-mentoring programs also focus on providing specific academic support or career exploration experiences. For example, the Cybermentor program pairs girls (ages 11–18) with female professionals in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) careers.^{6,7} Such mentors may be rare and hence, harder to locate and recruit for participation in mentoring programs employing an in-person mentoring design. E-mentoring can also assist with the transition of mentees into higher education, especially for youth who do not have familiarity or easy access to university campuses. For instance, CAMP Osprey⁸ provides college-aged mentors to youth who live far away from university campuses and/or have little exposure to the college experience. In this program, students are even provided with opportunities for virtual college campus tours.

E-mentoring can also offer access to mentors who bring specific academic subject-matter expertise. For example, many of the projects developed by

Dr. Kevin O’Neill and colleagues pair scholars and academics in fields such as history with classrooms of students working on projects related to the mentors’ areas of expertise.⁹ This program model allows young learners to access experts with knowledge and understanding that would have been unthinkable using in-person methods.

We also found examples in the literature of programs focused on improving social and communication skills. Using an electronic relationship to help youth build their online communication abilities — critical in today’s world — these programs teach youth how to engage new people and build relationships with diverse individuals. Two such programs were part of this project’s Working Group, the CricketTogether and TryEngineering Together programs, which provide mentors to children in third through fifth grades so that the mentees can build literacy and STEM skills, respectively, while being exposed to adult role models and learning about others who are different from themselves. Other programs emphasized exposure to a variety of diverse people, both in general¹⁰ and in specific career fields.¹¹ (You can read about a great example of mentoring for specific career fields in the case study of the Cybermentor program below.)



E-MENTORING IN ACTION:

CYBERMENTOR AND THE GROUP EFFORT TO KEEP YOUNG WOMEN ON STEM PATHWAYS

Cybermentor is a nationwide German e-mentoring program that encourages girls to pursue their interests in STEM through academic coursework and career opportunities. In operation since 2005, the program matches up to 800 mentees per cycle with female mentors via an algorithmic matching process. Mentees are girls from 11 to 18 years of age from high-achiever academic tracks. Their mentors are university-educated women working in various STEM domains in the public and private sectors or pursuing advanced degrees in STEM. In addition to their mentoring dyads, the mentees are also assigned to small mentoring groups — consisting of two dyad pairs — that share similar STEM interests. Each mentoring cycle lasts one year and is divided into four consecutive phases. Each phase has a different focus and facilitates collaborative work on exciting STEM projects, including interdisciplinary activities. Mentees can participate in several consecutive mentoring cycles. Cybermentor is being thoroughly evaluated and is the subject of numerous research studies. In 2017, the program was included in the Gender Action Portal of the Harvard Kennedy School.

The combination of one-to-one mentoring dyads with small mentoring groups has increased program engagement. When compared to other mentoring settings, participants in Cybermentor achieve and maintain higher levels of engagement (i.e., the number and frequency of interactions on the platform). The small-group mentoring approach is especially effective in that it encourages a reciprocal exchange of STEM ideas and experiences among participants, mentees and mentors alike. This exchange drives home the crucial realization that the girls are “not alone” in their STEM interests, while simultaneously affording mentors the opportunity to impart their diverse knowledge of experiences related to identifying as a female professional in a STEM field.

To further enhance the participants’ shared learning environment, Cybermentor offers them a bulletin board feature. The bulletin boards offer mentors and mentees opportunities to discuss topics that range from detailed domain-specific questions to general STEM-related discussions. Participants discuss STEM-related topics such as subjects of study, research inquiries, everyday STEM phenomena, experiments, and career enhancement opportunities. While the boards are designed to facilitate STEM-intensive discussions, they are nevertheless kept open enough (i.e., with fewer predetermined topics) to allow relevant themes to emerge organically from participants’ discussions. The boards serve as networking opportunities for mentees and mentors alike and thereby, significantly increase members’ interactions. This resource broadens the reach of the overall community and boosts the positive impact that encouragement and behavior modeling have on the participants’ self-confidence.

These essential touchpoints — small group mentoring and the bulletin board feature — facilitate a STEM-friendly learning environment where ongoing dialogue centered on girls and women in STEM is highly valued and appreciated by all participants.



Finally, e-mentoring may provide mentors to those youth who are simply more geographically or socially isolated and may not have access to a large number of adults who can fill this role in their lives, such as rural youth.^{12,13} Some have speculated that e-mentoring can be a tremendous equity tool in bringing increased and specific forms of social

capital to otherwise isolated populations of youth, such as those in rural communities or communities lacking in sufficient adult role models.¹⁴ You can see how one MENTOR Affiliate is using e-mentoring to increase access to mentors in smaller communities across the state in the following case study.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION:

MAXIMIZING MENTORING IN SMALLER COMMUNITIES AND RURAL AREAS WITH THE IOWA MENTORING PARTNERSHIP AND THE LINKS TO LNX PROGRAM

The Iowa Mentoring Partnership (IMP) has long worked to bring the power of mentoring to rural communities across the state. While the larger metropolitan areas, such as Des Moines and Cedar Rapids, feature large pools of potential mentors and easy access to mentoring activities and locations, the more rural parts of the state can struggle to find sufficient mentors and face challenges for getting matches together and finding fun, relevant activities. These challenges apply to rural communities across America, often leaving rural youth underserved and lacking connection to caring adults and critical social capital.

In response to this challenge, IMP developed an e-mentoring platform that allows mentors and youth to communicate via a closed messaging system. This platform is made available at no cost to IMP partner programs. This keeps rural programs from having to invest in developing an expensive e-mentoring platform from scratch, offers security features that make it a good fit for a variety of programs and settings (particularly schools), and connects rural youth to mentors who might not otherwise volunteer because of the challenges caused by geographic distance.

In one example of how this platform is utilized in the field, the Links to LNX mentoring program based in Shenandoah, Iowa, partners with IMP to utilize the online messaging platform as a core e-mentoring tool. The Links program guides first-year students at Shenandoah High School in building relationships with adults to encourage personal, academic, and career accomplishments.

Shenandoah Schools had an established traditional one-to-one mentoring program when they took over an e-mentoring program component previously led by a county-wide organization. Shenandoah staff reached out to the IMP for technical assistance in developing an e-mentoring opportunity and to learn about how the online platform might increase youths' access to additional mentors from the surrounding areas. The ability to monitor matches in a closed system, as well as the simplicity of the system, were a good fit for both the needs of the schools and the students themselves.

The Links program includes: 1) regular electronic messaging between mentees and mentors, prompted weekly as a part of the school's required Language Arts 9 curriculum; 2) in-person match meetings



three or four times a year during a group activity with a career or job skills presentation; and 3) business tours of local community businesses four or five times a year. By offering ongoing encouragement from e-mentors with hands-on opportunities to explore career options, Shenandoah youth have access to much needed support and exposure to mentors who might have otherwise never been a part of their lives. And as an early adopter and robust user of the platform, the Links program director has been instrumental in advising improvements to the platform to better serve other Iowa programs.

Additionally, the number of programs using this platform is set to increase dramatically in the years to come as IMP is preparing for a major expansion as part of a governor’s initiative on college access and persistence, specifically using the e-mentoring platform to support community college students as they matriculate and better connect them to industry and potential jobs around the state. This will not only offer critical support to the students, but hopefully also strengthen the school-to-career pipeline and keep more graduates in-state as they pursue their careers. Thus, what started as a tool to address the needs of isolated rural youth is now expanding to be part of a major effort to retain Iowa’s best and brightest to help the state thrive in the future.

Settings of E-Mentoring Programs

E-mentoring programs are frequently offered in schools, either as part of a project-based lesson in a specific classroom (e.g., biology students at a high school being mentored by biology majors at a local university on how to conduct an experiment) or as a service offered to some subset of students through the school (e.g., offering e-mentoring on the college application process to all high school juniors and seniors). In these school-based settings, it is common for teachers and other school personnel to lead the implementation of the program at the site, with limited help from actual mentoring program staff who may be far away geographically.

In other instances, e-mentoring is accessed outside of a school or other fixed program location. In these types of programs, participants are free to connect with each other when and how they choose. This can include from personal mobile devices or, in some cases, a shared computer at home or in some other environment (e.g., a public library). While these types of programs offer more flexibility in

how matches communicate with one another, they also present more technology challenges, as well as potentially more security and safety challenges, as it can be harder to keep user information private when the mentoring platform is accessed on shared devices outside of the control of the program or on social media.

Throughout the remainder of this supplement, you will read about e-mentoring programs that fit the descriptions of many of the technologies, interaction styles, settings, and goals noted above. The simple “typology” table that follows illustrates this diversity in the field and the many considerations that go into developing programs like these. We encountered a very rich diversity of programs in the research literature reviewed for this project, as well as in the members of the Working Group that contributed their experiences and expertise to the recommendations offered here. You can learn more about that Working Group starting on page XX and in the “E-Mentoring in Action” snapshots scattered throughout the publication.



SIMPLE TYPOLOGY OF E-MENTORING PROGRAMS BY TECHNOLOGY USED

Technology Used	E-mail	Forum/Bulletin Board	Video Conference	Live Chat/Text App/ Direct Messaging	Proprietary Multifeature Platform
Common match structures	One-to-one	One-to-one, blended, or layered group matching, totally unmatched	One-to-one	One-to-one, small group	One-to-one
Interaction mode	Asynchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Could be either (based on app)	Usually a combination, depending on features
Interaction schedule and frequency	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Often scheduled, frequency determined by participants unless directed by program	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Often scheduled, frequency often determined by program and use of curriculum
Program observation of interactions	Minimal (if participants use their own accounts)	High	Minimal (if not through proprietary platform)	Minimal (unless program offers app, then high)	High
Common ages served	MS, HS, YA	MS, HS, YA	HS, YA	MS, HS, YA	K-5, MS, HS
Common settings for engaging with the technology	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Youth and mentor residences, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	School classrooms, workplaces (for mentors), youth and mentor residences
Strengths of model	Easy-to-use and familiar technology, allows for longer messages and file attachments, little tech maintenance by program	Thematic sorting of messages, ability to create subgroups, simple to use, potential access to many mentors, easy tracking of participation	Real-time interactions and synchronous conversation, putting a “face” on the match	Immediate, potentially 24/7 contact, mobile-friendly and easy-to-use for youth, free (unless program develops app)	All features (e.g., ideas for match activities and program rules/guidance) integrated into user experience, flexible modes of communication, tremendous potential for match monitoring and support
Challenges of model	Participants may wait for messages to be read or responded to, not ideal for quick conversations, “outdated” technology to youth, requires constant staff nudging of participation	Access to many mentors may overwhelm individualized support, participants may need reminders to log in and participate, moderation by staff is needed	Limited activity integration, video can exacerbate feelings of distance	Limited message length in some apps, not ideal for in-depth sharing of complex feelings or thoughts; limited ability to share files/resources; data plans can incur monetary costs; messages may not be encrypted	Expensive to develop and maintain, lots of staff oversight and platform management, need to train participants, daunting for new adopters
Common program examples	Program pairing youth with health challenges with adult mentors who have experience with similar challenges to exchange messages of support and perseverance	Program for youth of color exploring STEM careers where they can interact with many STEM professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnicities	Program providing personalized support to isolated youth who are experiencing mental health challenges and suicidal ideation	Program to support youth during the college application process using frequent check-ins and reminders to take care of specific steps	Classroom-based program for youth engaged in skill-building and project-based learning paired with subject matter experts from local companies



THE NEED FOR A SUPPLEMENT ON E-MENTORING

Mentoring is inherently a “people-centered” activity, with the core adult-youth relationship supported by myriad other interpersonal relationships and engagements that impact everything from initial volunteer recruitment, to the training of mentors and youth, to the supervision and eventual closure of the match. Even a cursory reading of the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* (EPPM) shows that all of these interactions are considered to be in-person as a default. That makes sense since so much of running a mentoring program is about engaging participants and creating meaningful relationships that are often filling a tangible gap in the life of a young person.

But in e-mentoring programs, all of those interactions are complicated, even compromised, by the remote nature of the services that are offered. Program staff might never lay eyes on a prospective mentor or meet a young person’s parents to better learn about their needs and understand the strengths the youth brings to the table. This program structure can have profound implications on everything from screening mentors for safety considerations to how to handle the sudden closure of a match. The often virtual nature of e-mentoring changes how a program structures their practices and staffs their services, as well as how they then promote the development of close, responsive, and meaningful relationships to program participants.

It is worth noting, however, that there is tremendous potential with e-mentoring that can also be brought out with strong program practices. These programs can offer both a volume of mentors and the delivery of “just-in-time” mentoring interactions that are frankly impossible to provide using in-person models. These programs can connect those

who are isolated to a world of support and allow youth to get expert advice in ways that only digital communication allows.

As with the other Supplements in this series, MENTOR believes e-mentoring represents a type of program where the traditional Elements of Effective Practice may not be a perfect fit and where more (and different) information is needed to establish what “effective” practices look like. The EPPM was primarily written with in-person mentoring programs in mind, drawing from research about primarily in-person models, and the result is that it is not entirely applicable to the nuances of e-mentoring models. We recognize that there are many additional or separate practices that may apply when the mentoring is through digital technology.

The recommendations provided here are intended to offer additional guidance, nuance, and detail on how e-mentoring programs can meet the Benchmarks and Enhancements of the EPPM. In some cases, we have created brand new Benchmarks related to practices unique to e-mentoring. In other cases, we have suggested that e-mentoring programs can rightly ignore some of the in-person-reliant practices suggested in the EPPM. E-mentoring programs should focus on the recommendations within each section that speak to their programmatic design and staffing, while also striving to meet the remaining practices in the EPPM, where appropriate. We hope that the additional, e-mentoring-specific practices included here will help programs design services that maximize their impact on youth and help close the mentoring gap with meaningful digital relationships.

Developing This Supplement

There are several steps MENTOR took in collaboration with our partners in developing this resource. In general, this process mirrored those taken in the development of the original EEPM, which builds on the strategies for developing clinical practice guidelines in other fields.¹⁵ This process ultimately results in a blend of research-informed practices and practitioner advice based on real-world application and experience.

1. THOROUGH SEARCH AND REVIEW OF E-MENTORING LITERATURE

We used a recent literature search conducted by one of the authors of this Supplement as the starting point for this resource.¹⁶ The authors then conducted a fresh search for additional relevant articles using several full-text article databases, including PubMed and PsychInfo, with some further searching based upon citations in the articles included in the previous search. The search emphasized several key criteria, such as prioritizing research studies employing an experimental design, limiting results to programs serving youth from elementary school through young adulthood (services targeting adults only were excluded), and emphasizing programs that exclusively or primarily communicated using technology. While we did include some book chapters, reports, and other documents that fell outside of these criteria, we tried as much as possible to prioritize citing peer-reviewed scientific literature in our review.

The result of this search was a collection of 72 resources we relied on as our core source material. The files include:

- **Type of document:**
 - 21 non-empirical papers (e.g., general articles, literature reviews, overviews)
 - 12 program descriptions or case studies
 - 6 dissertations or master's theses
 - 3 background research on related fields
- **Study design employed in empirical papers:**
 - 6 experimental research design
 - 11 nonexperimental research design (e.g., correlational, qualitative, single-subject)
- **Mentee population age group in e-mentoring papers or reports:**
 - 12 young adults
 - 25 middle or high school
 - 5 elementary school
- **Number of articles about programs serving specific populations of mentees:**
 - 12 about mentees with one or more disabilities
 - 2 about mentees applying to college
 - 3 about mentees with specific career interests

MAJOR TRENDS

In addition to this simple breakdown, the team of authors also read and coded each article with relevant keywords, allowing us to start to identify patterns and trends in the disparate articles we were reading. A few of those trends are worth noting up front here, as they shaped the conclusions and recommendations found in the remainder of this resource:

- **A lack of rigorous outcome evaluation or implementation studies makes it hard to identify clear “best” practices** – While the literature on e-mentoring is growing rapidly, there is an insufficient number of well-designed experimental studies evaluating the effectiveness of technology-driven mentoring on youth outcomes. While not every e-mentoring program should be expected to conduct a randomized controlled trial, it is difficult to pinpoint which elements of e-mentoring or which program practices are the most effective (or ineffective) without a decent number of studies that at least provide pre- and post-program data, as compared to a comparison or control group. The other challenge here is that with technology changing so rapidly, it is often hard for the peer-reviewed literature to keep up with timely reporting of evaluation studies for e-mentoring platforms that are cutting edge and innovative. In fact, it is possible that by the time a program is established, reviewed, and thoroughly described and evaluated in peer-reviewed publications, the technology that was used may have become obsolete or surpassed by newer models or iterations.
- **Modern technology has rendered some of these software platform distinctions moot** – Again, with the rapid pace of technology development, the platforms used in e-mentoring can quickly become

outdated. For instance, listservs, while still used by some professionals, have been largely replaced by platforms such as Slack, Google groups, WhatsApp group chats, or Facebook groups, especially among youth. Or programs developed prior to the introduction of smartphones, apps, and direct messaging programs are likely now obsolete in many of their features. Some of the literature we reviewed recommended taking into serious consideration whether mentors and mentees should communicate via email, video calls, or group bulletin boards, as examples. With smartphones, all of those communication modes (and more) can be used on a single device, sometimes even within a single app! While technology platform selection may have been a sticking point for some programs a decade or two ago, mobile technology makes it possible to use a variety of communication tools rather easily.

- **There are many processes through which e-mentoring can facilitate positive gains or personal growth for youth** – One of the most impressive aspects of our literature review was the tremendous diversity of programs working in the e-mentoring space. Instead of finding a limited field offering these relationships to narrow groups of youth, we found programs serving a diverse array of youth and using many different theories of change and intervention strategies in the youth they were serving. Among the most common theoretical frameworks used by e-mentoring programs were:
 - Offsetting youth isolation and increasing feelings of belonging and connectedness. This outcome was especially common, as noted above, in programs serving youth with isolating disabilities,¹⁷ youth with communication challenges that made in-person interactions



difficult^{18,19} and youth isolated because of chronic medical conditions.²⁰

- Providing access to high-level subject matter expertise and project/goal-setting support. As noted previously, a number of programs in this space connected youth to industry leaders and experts as project supports^{21,22} or offered mentors to support setting and achieving specific time-limited goals.²³
- Increasing social support and feelings of self-efficacy. Many programs endeavor to help youth feel extra support as they wrestle with a challenge²⁴ or build their self-efficacy and belief that they can manage or overcome their circumstances.²⁵
- Increasing social capital and the building of networks. Several programs were focused on helping youth build networks of support, usually within career spaces,²⁶ although this type of mentoring may have the ability to transfer social capital broadly.²⁷
- Offering mentees a safe space to share and process their feelings. While some of the literature talked about a majority of communication occurring through technology as a potential barrier to sharing and building trust and intimacy, others talked about how communicating remotely and through technology may offer youth a bit of a “shield” or a safer vantage point to share painful, deep, or complex emotions. Many articles discussed how youth often felt more comfortable sharing online as opposed to in person; online they could compose better responses, take time to gather their emotions, and opt out of a difficult conversation, if desired.^{28,29}

• **There are several factors that can moderate the**

impact of e-mentoring relationships – While little research exists on these factors, they were mentioned in much of the literature we reviewed and were repeated topics of discussion during our drafting of this supplement.

- Demographics. Some youth, such as those in rural locations or of lower socioeconomic status, may benefit from e-mentoring more than youth who do not have difficulty accessing transportation or a more stable family setting.
- Personal factors. Both a mentor and a mentee’s personal circumstances can influence the effectiveness of an e-mentoring program. For instance, a mentor who is not as technology literate as a young person may find using technology to communicate challenging or limiting. On the other hand, a youth who needs support that goes beyond infrequent face-to-face meetings may find it comforting to be able to reach a mentor in real time.
- Interpersonal communication styles. A mentor who is used to talking by phone or in person may struggle with the quick texts, emojis, or acronyms commonly used in chats, if it is not their usual form of communication. On the mentee side, emotional maturity may be important, as being able to share emotions in writing without the facial and body language cues available during in-person meetings is crucial. A mentee who has social anxiety may find e-mentoring more beneficial than traditional in-person programs, as this form of mentoring allows such individuals to relax and respond in a more comfortable setting.³⁰
- Accessibility. E-mentoring is potentially more accessible for youth with a physical,



intellectual, or developmental disability or chronic health condition,³¹ since it does not necessarily require that the mentoring interactions happen at a specific location. When the mentoring can happen in a youth's home or using the tools they need for support, it allows them to access mentors that might not be available if they had to meet them in-person.

- Program implementation. Access to stable mobile network or internet service is essential for the success of an e-mentoring program, as is easy access to technological support. Also, e-mentoring alone versus “blended” programs where the electronic communication is combined with traditional face-to-face meetings could produce different outcomes for youth.

• **Several factors that can mediate or facilitate the impact of e-mentoring relationships** – Perhaps the strongest themes we found in the research literature had to do with several factors that can influence just how strong those impacts from e-mentoring relationships can be.

- Relationship satisfaction and conversational compatibility. Some e-mentoring programs focus on relationships that are intended to be emotionally close and meaningful, while others focus on relationships that are task-focused and more instrumental in nature. But regardless of which approach programs take, there was a strong trend in the literature showing relationship satisfaction was closely tied to relationship outcomes. One of the leading factors in relationship closeness was what one researcher termed “electronic chemistry” — the ability of mentors and youth to connect electronically in ways that

were mutually satisfying, fun, and imbued with personality in spite of the limitations of communicating digitally.³² In fact, it was theorized that online relationships can often become what are called “hyper-relationships” where the closeness and satisfaction exceeds in-person relationships because status and other factors are stripped away in the virtual environment, and users can craft perfect responses that represent their best selves at all times.³³

However, because not all one-to-one mentoring relationships find that “spark” of compatibility, some programs opt for a group approach, creating an open group culture of mentoring where all participants see how mentors and youth interact in an open community. One prominent researcher, Dr. Kevin O’Neill, describes this as “mentoring in the open.” To see how this concept plays out in the classroom-based e-mentoring projects he has developed, see the following E-Mentoring in Action.

- Frequency of interactions. It should come as no surprise that for mentoring to be effective, participants in the relationship must be, well, participating. Several scholars noted that the frequency of communications in e-mentoring programs almost always dissipates over time (e.g., see the findings in Risquez & Sanchez-Garcia³⁴), even in cases where the program is providing a curriculum or prompting ongoing exchanges. Some of this reduction in participation frequency is completely natural, as initial enthusiasm wanes over time. Some may be a sign that the match is not communicating effectively or that one member is not holding up their



end of the “electronic chemistry” traits. But the research was quite clear that programs should do everything they can to boost the frequency and depth of interactions that mentors and youth have. This frequency was closely tied to outcomes and overall satisfaction with the experience.^{35,36,37,38,39} Our Working Group also noted the frequency

of interactions as a common challenge and offered several suggestions for addressing this (detailed later in this resource), such as setting communication expectations up front, ongoing communication reminders, and rigorous supervision of matches to see who is lagging in their participation.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION: “MENTORING IN THE OPEN” IN A CLASSROOM-BASED MODEL

“Mentoring in the Open” engages a community approach to e-mentoring. Mentors and mentees are assigned to small participation groups where guidance and conversation are exchanged. Each small group exists within a larger electronic platform space which is public to all program participants, allowing the communications happening within the small groups to be visible and accessible to all participating mentors and mentees. This openness enables each mentor and mentee to directly observe successful mentoring in action.

Dr. Kevin O’Neill, a professor of Education and Technology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada, has studied the Mentoring in the Open approach. His research affords a compelling understanding of why “mentoring in the open” is a beneficial way to advance e-mentoring efforts. Participants in this approach are exposed to the mentoring relationships being built in other small groups, giving them an appreciative window into “what works” amongst their peers — what guidance and advice they would like to receive in their mentoring relationships, and how their peers have made it possible for their mentors to provide it. Mentees are thus given a platform to strengthen and enable pathways of support for their peers.

“Mentoring in the Open” offers mentoring practitioners some important reminders — to appreciate that knowledge-centered spaces can be found anywhere and to further explore the untapped potential of a community approach to e-mentoring.



2. WORKING GROUP OF EXPERT PRACTITIONERS AND RESEARCHERS

Given the research literature in the e-mentoring space is thin, we knew we would need the input and expertise of a diverse array of programs and researchers working in this space to identify practices that had real-world value and applicability. The representatives of this group are detailed below. They were absolutely instrumental in the development and refinement of the recommendations found in the remainder of this resource.



Michael Carter and Frances Maher

Strive for College

Every year in the United States, 500,000 academically qualified, low-income students who should go on to college fail to do so. Strive is changing that. We train volunteer mentors to help guide students through the college and financial aid application process via our online platform powered by proprietary technology. Ninety-seven percent of Strive students go on to college, and the majority of those do so without having to take on any debt for tuition due to scholarships and financial aid their mentors helped them secure.

Strive serves students who traditionally encounter the most barriers to accessing college:

- 88 percent of Strive students live in a household with less than \$50,000 in annual income
- 68 percent live in a household with no college graduates
- 58 percent identify as persons of color
- 40 percent live in nonurban areas

Strive is the only college access organization that serves students in all 50 states. Since 2016, over 600,000 students have opted in for a Strive mentor.

Matthias Mader

Universität Regensburg

Matthias Mader (Cybermentor, Global Talent Mentoring) has a Master's of Arts in German studies, musicology, and journalism; teacher training for the subjects German and history (high achiever track). Since 2017, he has served as a researcher and Chair for the School Research, School Development, and Evaluation at the University of Regensburg, Germany. He is part of a team developing and preparing "Global Talent Mentoring" (<https://gtmh.world>) a selective global e-mentoring program for highly talented and extremely motivated youth in STEMM, as a flagship offering of the upcoming "World Giftedness Center" (<https://worldgiftednesscenter.org/>). He is currently working on "Cybermentor" and a development/support program for school mentoring (as part of the German-wide research program "Leistung macht Schule"). His research interests include self-regulated learning, mentoring, network effects, and gifted education.



M. Michelle Derosier, Kate Schrauth, and Wendy Siegelman

iCouldBe

Mission: Provide at-risk middle and high school students with an online community of professional mentors, empowering teens to stay in school, plan for future careers, and achieve in life.

iCouldBe brings online mentors from all career backgrounds into classrooms where 50 to 100 percent of students live at or below the poverty line. Mentors and mentees engage on a technology platform and work one-to-one throughout the school year on structured activities focused on academic success, career exploration, and postsecondary planning. iCouldBe's program has shown promising outcomes of increased mentee self-efficacy (belief in one's ability to succeed) and development of career aspirations, as well as networking, communication, writing, teamwork, relationship-building, and other critical hard and soft twenty-first century skills.

Since 2000:

- 21,500 mentees served
- 273,545 mentoring hours completed by mentees and mentors
- 12.7 mentoring hours per mentee during a school year-long program



Jim Lauckhardt and Regina Leslie

iMentor

iMentor is a national organization that builds mentoring relationships that empower first-generation students from low-income communities to graduate high school, succeed in college, and achieve their ambitions. Since 1999, we have matched more than 26,000 mentors with students. Our model harnesses the power of long-term, personal relationships to help students succeed. Each year, we recruit thousands of volunteers who commit to mentor a high school student for at least three years



Ellen Mahoney

Sea Change Mentoring

Sea Change Mentoring matches emerging adults ages 16 to 23 who grew up across cultures and nations with adult professionals who did the same. Mentors help our protégés identify the skills and insights they gleaned overseas and apply them to their personal, academic and career goals. At the same time, they help kids develop networks and strategies to face some of the challenges that are specific to growing up global. Protégés and mentors meet weekly over video conferencing, no matter where they are in the world, for one year or more and engage in our social and emotional development activities. Mentors receive monthly coaching sessions, and registered families have access to vetted resources and guidance, including additional support via video conferencing. www.seachangementoring.com



Kevin O'Neill

Simon Fraser University

Dr. Kevin O'Neill is an associate professor of Education and Technology at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia, Canada, where he cofounded the graduate programs in Educational Technology and Learning Design. His program of design-based research on e-mentoring for secondary school students began in 1994, when he was a doctoral student in Learning Sciences at Northwestern University. In addition to e-mentoring, Kevin's scholarly interests include the teaching and learning of history, and the examination of analogies for educational research and practice.



Mary Sheka

Iowa Mentoring Partnership

The Iowa Mentoring Partnership (IMP) is a collaborative program of Volunteer Iowa and serves as the certifying body for quality local youth mentoring programs. Youth mentoring programs are offered training opportunities, advocacy initiatives, and statewide marketing and media campaigns. IMP also works to build collaborative relationships between government, private, and public agencies in support of these local mentoring programs, which are essential for strengthening families, communities, and the state of Iowa.

The Links to LNX mentoring program partners with the Iowa Mentoring Partnership (IMP) to utilize their online messaging platform as an e-mentoring tool. The Links program guides first-year students at Shenandoah High School in building relationships with local community members to encourage personal, academic, and career accomplishments.



Laura Woodside and Nina Zolt

CricketTogether and TryEngineering Together by Cricket Media

Cricket Media® (www.cricketmedia.com) is a mission-based global education company known for creating high quality print and multimedia products for children, families, e-mentors, teachers, and partners that improve learning opportunities for everyone. Led by its nine award-winning publications for children and customizable research-tested collaborative learning/e-mentoring platforms, CricketTogether (www.crickettogether.com) and TryEngineering Together (www.tryengineeringtogether.com), the company is committed to making, building, and supporting innovative learning experiences with high-quality, age-appropriate content.



3. DEVELOPMENT AND REFINEMENT OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND FULL PRODUCT

Once the literature review was complete and the Working Group was formed, the authors of this guide drafted the initial recommendations and received feedback from the group over the course of three meetings in May and June 2019. A second version of the recommendations was reviewed in late June. The final version of the recommendations in this guide, and the draft of the narrative text that surrounds them, was completed in a final meeting of the Working Group in late July 2019.

Tips for Using this Supplement to the EEPM

This Supplement to the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* will be most useful to those starting e-mentoring programs, as well as to those who are looking to strengthen their existing services. The sections of recommendations included here, from Recruitment through Closure, offer research- and practice-informed recommendations that should help e-mentoring programs implement effective services beyond just adhering to the generic practices suggested in the original EEPM.

For each Benchmark and Enhancement recommended in the original EEPM, the authors have either:

- Offered additional practice recommendations for these specific types of programs
- Noted where no additional recommendations were warranted
- Noted where a Benchmark or Enhancement might not be applicable at all for e-mentoring programs (these most often relate to parental involvement in

programs where mentees are over 18 and parental permission is no longer mandated, or where the mentoring program is implemented in a school during the regular school day)

Where possible, we have noted when certain recommendations are more or less applicable to some e-mentoring programs based on their technology platform and program goals or structure. But in general, the **colored recommendations** will provide critical advice to e-mentoring programs.

Following the listing of the recommended practices, there is an essay that highlights key themes for managing a successful e-mentoring program. This section discusses the Recommendations in more detail and offers examples from the research and literature reviewed that support the suggested practices.

Programs are encouraged to implement as many of the core Benchmarks and Enhancements of the EEPM as possible. There is always room to improve or strengthen the delivery of any program. But we feel that following the recommendations here will be helpful to any mentoring program that is:

- Using a technology platform to facilitate most or all of the interactions between mentors and youth
- Using technology to provide forms of mentoring that are not possible in person
- Using technology to offer the ideal form of mentoring for the needs of the youth served

If there is one thing that is clear in the literature we reviewed and in the conversations we had with our Working Group members, it is that these programs can open up a world of caring adult support to young people which was not possible even 20

years ago, at the turn of the twenty-first century. The spread of highly powered mobile technology has made this global network of mentoring even more possible. In fact, reading some of the scholarly articles on “telementoring” from even a decade ago was almost funny in terms of how out-of-date the technology discussion was. We have no doubt that the e-mentoring programs a decade or two from now will be radically different from what we see today as technology evolves. But MENTOR feels that by sharing these practice guidelines at this point in time, by putting a stake in the ground as to what quality e-mentoring should look like, we are setting the stage for solid programming in the future, no matter what bells and whistles future technology allows for. We encourage readers to remember that the efficacy of these types of programs is not really about the fancy technology, but rather its theory of change and how well that technology and mentors’ roles are aligned with the needs and experiences of the youth served.

There are universal, research-based truths about e-mentoring here — the importance of training participants to communicate well with one another via technology, the ability of technology to connect the disconnected and offer a safe space to the hurt or disenfranchised, the importance of nudging participants to remain active, the value of providing real-time coaching to mentors — that we think will carry forward. We hope the practitioners of today and the future find value in these recommendations and use them to build impactful, diverse e-mentoring experiences for all the youth who need them.

And for any policymaker or practitioner who is still skeptical about the benefits of e-mentoring, the first-person story from Strive for College alum, and current mentor, Frances Maher should inspire them to build e-mentoring programs that empower youth and change lives.



E-MENTORING IN ACTION:

REFLECTIONS FROM A STRIVE FOR COLLEGE ALUM WHO RETURNED TO MENTOR OTHERS – BY FRANCES MAHER

As a first-generation college student coming from a low-income household, I was initially intimidated by the prospect of applying to and attending college. A barrier for me was not having a person I could reach out to for help with my pressing questions about the college application process. Support came in the form of the partnership between the Common Application and Strive for College. Participating as a mentee provided me with the opportunity to be connected with a Strive for College mentor who would guide and encourage me throughout the college application and financial aid processes during my senior year of high school. Whenever I had a question regarding my college applications, scholarship applications, or financial aid, my mentor, Bill Copeland, a Partner [retired] at Deloitte, was there to guide me through the process. I was matched with Mr. Copeland through Deloitte's RightStep Virtual Mentoring program powered by the Deloitte Foundation RightStep Education Fund. Deloitte engages thousands of virtual mentors with Strive for College's platform. Mr. Copeland provided feedback about my college application questions and made it a priority to get to know me and share life advice through phone calls and video chats.

As a high school student, I felt my community lacked effective college preparatory resources, especially resources for students who are first-generation college students or who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds. E-mentoring through the Strive for College program gave me the opportunity to access many college preparatory resources I would otherwise have not had access to. The Strive for College virtual platform provided me with access to engage with the wider Strive community as well as free access to comprehensive guides through every part of the college application process. These guides include preparing, applying, selecting, and moving to college. The Strive for College app made it easy for me to interact with my mentor and to access college preparation resources on my phone. I could instantly send my mentor a message through the Strive for College app if I had an immediate question.

After having a positive experience as a mentee in Strive for College, I decided to apply to be a Strive mentor. I appreciated how Strive for College had a comprehensive screening process for prospective mentors to ensure the safety and suitability for mentoring youth. As a prospective mentor, I completed a comprehensive online application with several questions to assess my eligibility and fit for the program. The Strive for College program required I complete and pass a comprehensive criminal background check. Once I was approved as a mentor, my biography and other important details essential for the matching process were published on the online platform to be viewed by mentees. Strive prospective mentees have the opportunity to choose their mentors based on characteristics in the mentor biographies and answers to application questions. The program provided me with three guides during my mentor training: a guide to using the online UStrive platform, setting up an effective mentor profile, and mentorship 101 – my role as a mentor.



I have had the opportunity to mentor six students during my two years as a Strive mentor. I am truly grateful to support them during one of the most important times of their lives. One of my favorite parts about being a Strive mentor is reading personal statements (for college applications) and providing advice. Personal statements are a window into a person's unique story and resonate the passion and commitment to seek a brighter future. I am filled with joy when I hear the news of college acceptances from my mentees. This is the moment all Strive mentors look forward to. My mentees see how all their hard work and commitment has paid off, and I am grateful to have helped them start the next exciting chapter of their lives.

As a Strive mentor, I found the Strive for College staff are supportive and open to feedback that helps mentors achieve meaningful relationships with their mentees. Strive for College values input from mentors and mentees and implements positive changes to the virtual platform quickly. If issues arise, I am grateful that Strive for College has a committed team of supportive staff.

Having a Strive for College mentor gave me the confidence to believe no matter what background I came from, I had the opportunity to attend college. At Strive, mentors go above and beyond with guiding their students because we are passionate about giving students an opportunity to pursue a brighter future.



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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR E-MENTORING PROGRAMS TO SUPPLEMENT THE EEPM

The following supplementary recommendations (in red) can support e-mentoring programs as they implement services and build strong online or virtual relationships. These recommendations will be most relevant to e-mentoring programs where youth participants are matched with more experienced mentors, but some may also be relevant to programs that offer unmatched group mentoring and discussion platforms where mentoring “conversations” occur. Please note that the ability of participants to additionally interact in-person with one another will vary widely from program to program, depending on program rules and geographic proximity, and may influence the relevance of some of the recommendations here. Also note that in instances where the program is implemented by a classroom teacher, after-school program staff, or other employees of partner organizations and host sites, we have considered those

individuals to be part of the staffing of the mentoring program and may refer to them here as “program staff” even though they technically work for that partner organization.

STANDARD 1 – RECRUITMENT

Standard: Recruit appropriate mentors and mentees by realistically describing the program’s aims and expected outcomes.

BENCHMARKS:

Mentor Recruitment

B.1.1 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits (to society, the company, and to mentees), practices, supports, and challenges of mentoring in the program.

1. Program recruitment messages offer a realistic portrayal of this e-mentoring opportunity, including the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges associated with the program’s platform and mentoring activities.
2. Program recruitment messages convey the benefit of e-mentoring for the unique population served by the program (e.g., youth with disabilities).
3. Program uses recruitment messages that detail the training, technical support, and safety practices (both for participants and for data protection) of the program.
4. Program recruitment messages clarify any technology or network requirements for participating.



B.1.2 Program utilizes recruitment strategies that build positive attitudes and emotions about mentoring.

5. Program conveys benefits and advantages of communicating using technology as an exclusive or primary communication approach in the program and builds mentor enthusiasm for e-mentoring, generally.

B.1.3 Program recruits mentors whose skills, motivations, and backgrounds best match the goals and structure of the program.

6. Program recruits mentors who are comfortable using electronic means of communication to build a relationship.

7. Program recruits mentors who have relevant experience or familiarity using the specific technology employed by the program.

B.1.4 Program encourages mentors to assist with recruitment efforts by providing them with resources to ask individuals they know, who meet the eligibility criteria of the program, to be a mentor.

B.1.5 Program trains and encourages mentees to identify and recruit appropriate mentors for themselves, when relevant.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

B.1.6 Program engages in recruitment strategies that realistically portray the benefits, practices, supports, and challenges of being mentored in the program.

8. For parents and guardians, program emphasizes the safety procedures and practices of the program.

9. For parents and guardians, program recruitment messages clarify any technology or network requirements for participating.

10. Program recruitment messages offer mentees a realistic portrayal of the experience of mentoring through electronic means.

11. Program recruitment messages convey the benefit of e-mentoring for the unique population of youth served by the program (e.g., youth with disabilities), when appropriate.

B.1.7 Program recruits mentees whose needs best match the services offered by the program.

PARTNER ORGANIZATION RECRUITMENT

New B.1.8 E-MENTORING: Mentoring program recruits schools, after-school programs, and other partners sites that can provide the staff time, technology resources, and other supports needed to successfully implement the e-mentoring program.

New B.1.9 E-MENTORING: Recruitment messages for partner organizations should include information about:

- a. Why e-mentoring is a good fit to meet the needs of the youth served by the partner.
- b. A realistic portrayal of the online or virtual mentoring experience.
- c. Information about the safety and technology support features of the program and the platform used for mentor-mentee communication.

ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Recruitment

E.1.1 Program communicates to mentors about how mentoring and volunteering can benefit them.

E.1.2 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.

E.1.3 Program uses multiple strategies to recruit mentors (e.g., direct ask, social media, traditional methods of mass communication, presentations, referrals) on an ongoing basis.

Mentee and Parent or Guardian Recruitment

E.1.4 Program has a publicly available written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentees in its program.

E.1.5 Program encourages mentees to recruit other peers to be mentees whose needs match the services offered by the program, when relevant.

STANDARD 2 - SCREENING

Screen prospective mentors to determine whether they have the time, commitment, and personal qualities to be a safe and effective mentor and screen prospective mentees, and their parents or guardians, about whether they have the time, commitment, and desire to be effectively mentored.

BENCHMARKS

Mentor Screening

B.2.1 Program has established criteria for accepting mentors into the program as well as criteria for disqualifying mentor applicants.

1. Program should establish criteria for:

- Identifying whether prospective mentors have reliable access to the technology needed to participate in the program.
- Determining mentors' comfort using the relevant technology and if training can adequately address mentors' technology use challenges or if these factors are disqualifying.
- Determining mentors' competencies in communicating effectively using the relevant technology and if training can adequately address mentors' effective communication skills or if these factors are disqualifying.

B.2.2 Prospective mentors complete a written* application that includes questions designed to help assess their safety and suitability for mentoring a youth.

2. The application form should include methods for assessing mentors' comfort, competence, and preferences in communicating using the relevant technology that will be used to communicate with youth.

3. The application form should gather information about whether the prospective mentor has reliable access to the technology and/or network needed to participate in the program.

B.2.3 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with each prospective mentor that includes questions designed to help the program assess his or her suitability for mentoring a youth.

4. Program conducts either an in-person, video conference, or phone interview with prospective mentors.



B.2.4 Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on prospective adult mentors, including searching a national criminal records database, along with sex offender and child abuse registries and, when relevant, driving records.

5. Program searches for and reviews prospective mentors' online presence and publicly accessible social media accounts to see how they communicate in online settings.

B.2.5 Program conducts reference check interviews with multiple adults who know an applicant (ideally, both personal and professional references) that include questions to help assess his or her suitability for mentoring youth.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.2.6 Prospective mentors agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or a minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

B.2.7 Prospective mentors agree in writing to participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentees that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by their mentoring program.

6. For programs that involve asynchronous communication, mentors agree to communicate with their mentee (both initiating interactions and responding) with the frequency and response time specified and required by the program.

Mentee Screening

B.2.8 Program has established criteria for accepting youth into the program as well as criteria that would disqualify a potential youth participant.

7. Program should establish criteria for identifying whether prospective mentees have reliable access to the technology and/or network needed to participate in the program.

8. Program should establish criteria for mentees' comfort using the relevant technology and determine if training can adequately address mentees' level of comfort to meet these criteria or if these challenges are disqualifying.

9. Program should set criteria around mentees' competencies with communicating effectively with the relevant technology and determine if training can adequately address mentees' communication competencies or if these challenges are disqualifying.

B.2.9 Parent(s)/guardian(s) complete an application[†] or referral form.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

B.2.10 Parent(s)/guardian(s) provide informed permission for their child to participate.

10. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should provide explicit permission for the program to collect and monitor electronic data about the child participating in the program.

B.2.11 Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing to a one-year (calendar or school) minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship, or the minimum time commitment that is required by the mentoring program.

B.2.12 Parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentees agree in writing that mentees participate in face-to-face meetings with their mentors that average a minimum of once a week and a total of four or more hours per month over the course of the relationship, or at a minimum frequency and amount of hours that are required by the mentoring program.

11. For programs that involve asynchronous communication, mentees agree to communicate with their mentor (both initiating and responding) with the frequency and response time required by the program.

ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Screening

E.2.1 Program utilizes national, fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks.

E.2.2 Program conducts at least one home visit of each prospective mentor, especially when the match may be meeting in the mentor's home.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.2.3 Program conducts comprehensive criminal background checks on all adults living in the home of prospective mentors, including searches of a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries, when the match may meet in mentors' homes.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.2.4 School-based programs assess mentors' interest in maintaining contact with their mentees during the summer months (following the close of

the academic school year) and offer assistance to matches in maintaining contact.

E.2.5 Programs that utilize adult mentors prioritize accepting mentor applicants who are older than college-age.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.2.6 Program uses evidence-based screening tools and practices to identify individuals who have attitudes and beliefs that support safe and effective mentoring relationships.

Mentee Screening

E.2.7 Mentees complete an application (either written or verbally).[‡]

12. For programs with open enrollment, the mentee application should include methods for determining mentees' comfort, competence and preferences in communicating using the relevant technology, especially to inform the matching process. Some programs enroll whole groups of youth (e.g., a whole classroom) and do not require an application at all.

13. For programs with open enrollment, the mentee application should gather information about whether the mentee has reliable access to the technology and /or network needed to participate in the program.

E.2.8 Mentees provide written assent agreeing to participate in their mentoring program.



STANDARD 3 – TRAINING

Train prospective mentors, mentees, and mentees' parents (or legal guardians or responsible adult) in the basic knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to build an effective and safe mentoring relationship using culturally appropriate language and tools.

BENCHMARKS

Mentor Training

B.3.1 Program provides a minimum of two hours of pre-match, in-person, mentor training.

1. Training may be delivered through online or virtual methods, but ideally will involve direct interaction between program staff and those being trained and utilize the technology platform used by the program, when feasible. Similarly, the duration of the training may vary from program to program based on the way training is delivered and the amount of ongoing or just-in-time training and instruction provided throughout the match. Programs are still expected to provide robust and adequate pre-match training.

B.3.2 Program provides pre-match training for mentors on the following topics:

a. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing, being late to meetings, and match termination).

2. Program provides training on the use of the technology platform(s).

3. Frequency of communication and response time expectations.

b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentee, parent or guardian, and the mentoring relationship.

c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles.

4. Supporting the youth in networking with others and building a web of support, when relevant to program goals.

d. Relationship development and maintenance.

5. Skills for having an online voice and communication style that will relate to young people; tips for being personable online and displaying sufficient online etiquette; understanding online discourse (e.g., text slang, emojis, gifs, etc.).

e. Ethical and safety issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship.

f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.

g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.

6. Training on the technical support offered by the program.

h. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of youth (e.g., children with an incarcerated parent, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.

i. Initiating the mentoring relationship.

7. Icebreakers and conversation starters.

8. Encouraging mentors to share information about themselves that is age-appropriate for the mentee, ask direct and specific questions, and use an informal, friendly conversation style in the initial messages to the mentee.



j. Developing an effective, positive relationship with mentee’s family, if relevant.

B.3.3 Program provides pre-match training for the mentor on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

- a. Appropriate physical contact
- b. Contact with mentoring program (e.g., who to contact, when to contact)
- c. Relationship monitoring requirements (e.g., response time, frequency, schedule)
- d. Approved activities

9. Including approved contact between participants, if any, outside of the technology employed by the program

e. Mandatory reporting requirements associated with suspected child abuse or neglect, and suicidality and homicidality

10. Common or unique ethical dilemmas created by asynchronous communication and how to resolve them

f. Confidentiality and anonymity

11. Keeping the communication platform/technology secure and confidential if being accessed from home or other public spaces

g. Digital and social media use

12. Sharing of social media outside of the platform provided by the program

- h. Overnight visits and out of town travel
- i. Money spent on mentee and mentoring activities
- j. Transportation

k. Emergency and crisis situation procedures

l. Health and medical care

m. Discipline

n. Substance use

o. Firearms and weapons

p. Inclusion of others in match meetings (e.g., siblings, mentee’s friends)

q. Photo and image use

r. Evaluation and use of data

s. Grievance procedures

t. Other program relevant topics

B.3.4 Program uses training practices and materials that are informed by empirical research or are themselves empirically evaluated.

New B.3.5 E-MENTORING: Programs training mentors remotely using technology should include learning checks or other methods of determining that mentors have fully completed the training and understood the content, especially if mentors are empowered to go through the training asynchronously on their own.

ENHANCEMENTS

Mentor Training

E.3.1 Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum for a total of six hours or more.

This volume of pre-match training may not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure and goals, but they may want to offer more robust training if mentors are offering support to youth with highly elevated levels of risk or mentors and youth will be working closely together on complicated projects or goals.



E.3.2 Program addresses the following post-match training topics:

- a. How developmental functioning may affect the mentoring relationship

13. How the developmental age of the youth might influence their use of and proficiency with communicating via technology

- b. How culture, gender, race, religion, socioeconomic status, and other demographic characteristics of the mentor and mentee may affect the mentoring relationship
- c. Topics tailored to the needs and characteristics of the mentee
- d. Closure procedures

14. Program offers ongoing training on improving the online communication styles and competencies of mentors

E.3.3 Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability to be a mentor and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

Mentee Training

E.3.4 Program provides training for the mentee on the following topics:

- a. Purpose of mentoring
- b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)

15. Use of the technology platform(s)

16. Frequency of communication and response time expectations; tips for being personable and conversational when interacting with their mentor and displaying sufficient online etiquette

17. Training on the technical support offered by the program

- c. Mentees' goals for mentoring
- d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles

18. Pre-match (and ongoing) training on improving the online communication styles and competencies of mentees

- f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships
- g. Initiating the mentoring relationship

19. Icebreakers and conversation starters

20. Encouraging mentees to share appropriate information about themselves, ask direct and specific questions, overcome initial shyness or inhibitions, and generally use a friendly conversation style in the initial messages to the mentor

- h. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship
- i. Internet safety (NEW)

E.3.5 Program provides training for the mentee on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served. See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.



Parent or Guardian Training

E.3.6 Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics:

- a. Purpose of mentoring
- b. Program requirements (e.g., match length, match frequency, duration of visits, protocols for missing or being late to meetings, match termination)

21. Use of the technology platform(s)

22. Frequency of communication and response time expectations

23. Training on the technical support offered by the program

- c. Parents' and mentees' goals for mentoring
- d. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles
- e. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles
- f. Ethics and safety in mentoring relationships

24. How and when to contact program staff with ethical or safety concerns

- g. Initiating the mentoring relationship
- h. Developing an effective, working relationship with your child's mentor
- i. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship

E.3.7 Program provides training for the parent(s) or guardian(s) on the following risk management policies that are matched to the program model, setting, and population served.

See B.3.3 for the list of policies to address during training.

STANDARD 4 – MATCHING & INITIATING

Match mentors and mentees, and initiate the mentoring relationship using strategies likely to increase the odds that mentoring relationships will endure and be effective.

BENCHMARKS

B.4.1 Program considers the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests; proximity; availability; age; gender; race; ethnicity; personality; expressed preferences of mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian; goals; strengths; previous experiences) when making matches.

1. Program considers the online communication styles and preferences of mentors and mentees when matching, particularly in programs where relationship closeness is important to achieving program outcomes.

B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee as well as, when relevant, with the parent or guardian.

2. Program provides mentors and youth with icebreakers (using the program platform(s)) and discussion topics to initiate the getting-to-know-you process.

B.4.3 Program staff member should be on site and/or present during the initial match meeting of the mentor and mentee, and, when relevant, parent or guardian.



3. Asynchronous programs should develop a policy around who initiates the first contact between the match and may consider having a staff member make a formal introduction between mentor and mentee as a way of initiating the match.

B.4.4 Mentor, mentee, a program staff member, and, when relevant, the mentee's parent or guardian, meet in person to sign a commitment agreement consenting to the program's rules and requirements (e.g., frequency, intensity and duration of match meetings; roles of each person involved in the mentoring relationship; frequency of contact with program), and risk management policies.

4. Commitment agreements may be handled electronically rather than in person depending on the setting and structure of the program.

ENHANCEMENTS

E.4.1 Programs match mentee with a mentor who is at least three years older than the mentee.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs that are offering a pure peer-to-peer mentoring experience; otherwise should still be a strongly considered practice.

E.4.2 Program sponsors a group matching event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another, and provide the program with feedback on match preferences.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.4.3 Program provides an opportunity for the parent(s) or guardian(s) to provide feedback about the mentor selected by the program, prior to the initiation meeting.

E.4.4 Initial match meeting occurs at the home of the mentee with the program staff member present, if the mentor will be picking up the mentee at the mentee's home for match meetings.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.4.5 Program staff member prepares mentor for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentor with background information about prospective mentee; remind mentor of confidentiality; discuss potential opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring proposed mentee).

E.4.6 Program staff member prepares mentee and his or her parents or guardians for the initial meeting after the match determination has been made (e.g., provide mentee and parent(s) with background information about selected mentor; discuss any family rules that should be shared with the mentor; discuss what information family members would like to share with the mentor and when).

5. Program clarifies any school or family rules that would limit mentees' screen time or online availability.

STANDARD 5 – MONITORING & SUPPORT

Monitor mentoring relationship milestones and child safety; and support matches through providing ongoing advice, problem-solving, training, and access to resources for the duration of each relationship.

BENCHMARKS

B.5.1 Program contacts mentors and mentees at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

B.5.2 At each mentor monitoring contact, program staff should ask mentors about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentor and mentee using a standardized procedure.

1. Program discusses during each check-in:

- Whether the mentor has had any technical challenges using the program platform or relevant technology.
- Whether the mentor had any challenges engaging in program activities or conversation with the mentee using the program technology.
- Any important upcoming program dates, events, activities, or milestones.

B.5.3 At each mentee monitoring contact, program should ask mentees about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

2. Program discusses during each check-in:

- Whether the mentee has had any technical challenges using the program platform or relevant technology.
- Whether the mentee had any challenges engaging in program activities or conversation with the mentor using the program technology.
- Any important upcoming program dates, events, activities, or milestones.

B.5.4 Program follows evidence-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from mentors and mentees about the quality of their mentoring relationships, and uses scientifically-tested relationship assessment tools.

B.5.5 Program contacts a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian, or teacher) at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and once a month thereafter.

May not be relevant for some e-mentoring programs depending on their structure and setting, but may still be relevant for those that are serving youth under 18 and have an expectation of close, mutual relationships.

B.5.6 At each monitoring contact with a responsible adult in the mentee's life, program asks about mentoring activities, mentee outcomes, child safety issues, the quality of the mentoring relationship, and the impact of mentoring on the mentee using a standardized procedure.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure and setting, especially their ability to easily connect with these types of third-party informants.



B.5.7 Program regularly assesses all matches to determine if they should be closed or encouraged to continue.

B.5.8 Program documents information about each mentor-mentee meeting including, at a minimum, the date, length, and description of activity completed.

3. Programs regularly analyze data collected by the platform or technology, which includes log-in and usage data, as well as the content of mentor-mentee interactions, to:

- **Ensure that participants are not sharing inappropriate information or otherwise violating program rules.**
- **Identify matches that may need additional support, coaching, or encouragement to participate.**

B.5.9 Program provides mentors with access to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, experienced mentors) to help mentors address challenges in their mentoring relationships as they arise.

4. Program makes on-demand or just-in-time training and support available to mentors who need to discuss issues or challenges in the relationship or who need to build additional skills.

B.5.10* Program provides mentees and parents or guardians with access or referrals to relevant resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others, publications, Web-based resources, available social service referrals) to help families address needs and challenges as they arise.

5. Program makes on-demand support available to mentees (and parents and guardians) who need to discuss issues or challenges in the relationship and/or in the use of the technology/platform.

B.5.11 Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.

See training section for ongoing training topics.

B.5.12* Program provides mentors with feedback on a regular basis regarding their mentees' outcomes and the impact of mentoring on their mentees to continuously improve mentee outcomes and encourage mentor retention.

New B.5.13 E-MENTORING: Program provides ongoing match activity ideas and discussion prompts periodically throughout the duration of the program in accordance with its goals and objectives.

ENHANCEMENTS

E.5.1 Program conducts a minimum of one in-person monitoring and support meeting per year with mentor, mentee, and when relevant, parent or guardian.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.5.2 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and/or offers information about activities that matches might wish to participate in together.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.5.3 Program hosts one or more group activities for matches and mentees' families.

May not be relevant for e-mentoring programs depending on their structure, setting, or other factors.

E.5.4 Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the mentoring relationship, prior to match closure.

E.5.5 At least once each school or calendar year of the mentoring relationship, program thanks the family or a responsible adult in each mentee's life (e.g., guardian or teacher) and recognizes their contributions in supporting the mentee's engagement in mentoring.

STANDARD 6 – CLOSURE

Facilitate bringing the match to closure in a way that affirms the contributions of the mentor and mentee, and offers them the opportunity to prepare for the closure and assess the experience.

BENCHMARKS

B.6.1 Program has a procedure to manage anticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

1. Program coordinates closure timeline with organizational partners and implementation sites to ensure that matches are clear around final communication dates and that program schedules align with those of schools and other partners.

2. Program requires a final series of communications between mentor and mentee that allow them to thank each other and, when relevant, reflect together on the relationship.

B.6.2 Program has a procedure to manage unanticipated closures, when members of the match are willing and able to engage in the closure process.

B.6.3* Program has a procedure to manage closure when one member of the match is unable or unwilling to engage in the closure process.

B.6.4 Program conducts exit interview with mentors and mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians.

3. An online exit survey may be more appropriate for some programs.

B.6.5* Program has a written policy and procedure, when relevant, for managing re-matching.

B.6.6* Program documents that closure procedures were followed.

B.6.7* Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentors that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentors' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for mentor notifying the mentee and his or her parents, if relevant, far enough in advance of the anticipated closure meeting to provide sufficient time to adequately prepare the mentee for closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact



4. Program reviews policies around future social media interaction or required restrictions for social media accounts or other online communication between mentors and mentees.

- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant
- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible re-matching, if relevant

B.6.8* Regardless of the reason for closure, the mentoring program should have a discussion with mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians that includes the following topics of conversation:

- a. Discussion of mentees' feelings about closure
- b. Discussion of reasons for closure, if relevant
- c. Discussion of positive experiences in the mentoring relationship
- d. Procedure for notification of mentor, if relevant, about the timing of closure
- e. Review of program rules for post-closure contact
- f. Creation of a plan for post-closure contact, if relevant

5. Program reviews policies around future social media interaction or required restrictions for social media accounts or other online communication between mentors and mentees.

- g. Creation of a plan for the last match meeting, if possible
- h. Discussion of possible re-matching, if relevant

B.6.9 Program has a written public statement to parents or guardians, if relevant, as well as to mentors and mentees that outline the terms of

match closure and the policies for mentor/mentee contact after a match ends (e.g., including contacts using digital or social media).

ENHANCEMENTS

E.6.1 At the conclusion of the agreed upon time period of the mentoring relationship, program explores the opportunity with mentors, mentees, and (when relevant) parents or guardians to continue the match for an additional period of time.

E.6.2 Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event for mentors and mentees, when relevant, to mark progress and transition or acknowledge change in the mentoring relationship.

6. Programs may offer an online or virtual celebration event if doing one in-person is not feasible.

E.6.3* Program staff provide training and support to mentees and mentors, as well as, when relevant, to parents or guardians, about how mentees can identify and connect with natural mentors in their lives.

PROGRAM DESIGN & MANAGEMENT

Program Theory of Change - Program has a theory of change that clearly articulates the goals that the program is working toward for mentees, including the benefits of offering the mentoring in an electronic format rather than face-to-face (or in combination if the program also offers limited in-person contact).

Among the decisions a program needs to make during initial design are:

- Whether the program will be one-to-one, group, or some combination of mentoring pairs and other groupings of participants, including whether participants have the opportunity to form their own groups.
- The degree to which the program will offer activities and discussion prompts to spur participation by mentors and mentees.
- How key program practices such as training and ongoing match support can be delivered via technology.
- The role parents and guardians will play in the program, if any.

NEW Selection and Management of an Appropriate Technology Platform - Considerations for selecting an appropriate communication/technology platform for the program include:

- The goals and focus of the program (alignment with the theory of change)
- Ensuring accessibility for all users (access to appropriate technology/internet)
- Literacy skills needed to effectively use the technology (consider both adult and youth literacy skills)
- Accessibility for users with disabilities (508 and other compliance frameworks)

- Ease of use and familiarity of participants with the technology being considered, including “mobile-friendliness” of the technology
- The capabilities for password protection, keeping user data safe, and avoiding inappropriate access
- Managing users (e.g., creating new accounts, managing emails and passwords, ease of enforcing platform rules, purging former participants)

Policies and Procedures - Program should have written (and online) policies and procedures that cover aspects of the program such as:

- Appropriate use of the technology and other rules for participant communication
- Expectations around frequency of mentor-mentee communication and response times, as well as participation in scheduled activities provided by the program throughout the match
- Rules around in-person contact or other digital contact between participants outside of the sanctioned technology/platform of the program
- User privacy and confidentiality, including steps that the program takes to monitor matches and ensure the safety of participants, which may be more intrusive in these programs than for in-person programs.
- How to access on-demand technical or online relationship support
- Post-program contact, both in person and using the program’s or other technology



Adequate and Appropriate Staffing - Program has program coordinator or platform facilitator/manager roles that have broad responsibility for managing online conversations, monitoring interactions for inappropriate behavior, fostering user engagement and participation, and handling issues related to platform upgrades, maintenance, and expansion of features. Whether through this role or other staff positions, the program should also provide adequate technical support to end users and be able to address problems using or accessing the platform or technology used by the program as they arise.



Data and Information Management - Program engages in two activities that can both improve the user experience and inform implementation evaluation over time:

- Track user engagement and participation in the technology platform of the program (e.g., frequency of log-ins, number of messages exchanged over periods of time, average response time when a communication is received, viewer analytics, etc.)
- When feasible, analyzing or observing the content of messages exchanged by mentors and youth to ensure appropriateness of content and alignment with program goals and mentor roles; informing future training based on message quality; offering prompts and engagement tips to participants who are struggling with message frequency or quality.

JUSTIFICATION AND DISCUSSION OF MAIN PRACTICE THEMES

This section offers readers a more detailed explanation of the recommendations suggested in the previous section, each of which is referred to here in bold with the Benchmark or Enhancement number followed by the recommendation number (e.g., the first recommendation under the first Benchmark in the Training Standard would be listed as **B.3.1 #1**). Readers are encouraged to consult this section for more detailed implementation information and additional research citations that can further explain and justify specific recommendations, as well as provide solid overall guidance for developing and maintaining a quality e-mentoring program.

MAJOR THEME 1

Choosing or Building the Right Technology for the Program

The first major theme of this supplement for e-mentoring programs involves issues associated with choosing or building the right technology for each mentoring program to meet the program's goals and the needs of the youth served by the program.

This theme emerges from recommendations on a variety of practices across several sections, including available technology tools and issues of privacy, confidentiality, and monitoring. In addition, there are specific recommendations in the Program Design, Management, and Evaluation sections that are also discussed within this theme.

Mentoring programs that have made the decision to require program participants to communicate and build their relationships primarily (or exclusively) without in-person contact must determine which technology best fits their needs. For some e-mentoring programs, a low-tech solution such as building the relationship through telephone calls and texting may be sufficient to meet their goals and objectives. Other programs may need to purchase or build a software platform to meet their needs, particularly if the program requires complex interactions including video calls and completion of structured activities. The decision to build a proprietary platform may also be driven by a desire to emphasize youth safety by having access to and monitoring of all of the communications shared between match members.

Issues to Consider When Selecting Hardware and Software for an E-Mentoring Program

This section reviews the hardware and software needs of an e-mentoring program, which may or may not be proprietary or specifically developed for this purpose. There are both advantages and disadvantages to developing and deploying a custom software platform compared to use of generic software that is not customized or developed by the mentoring program. The issues, advantages, and disadvantages associated with each type of software solution are summarized in Table 1 on the following pages.



TABLE 1. ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH THE TYPE OF SOFTWARE PLATFORM EMPLOYED IN AN E-MENTORING PROGRAM

Issue	Custom Technology	Commonly Used Technology
Ease of access	<p>Advantage – A custom software platform could be designed to serve a subpopulation of youth who have a specific disability, making it more accessible and usable for them. Many of these platforms are web-based, which allow for simple access from a variety of locations and devices.</p> <p>Disadvantage – Would likely require use of a special app or another login for users to remember and manage. Could be a barrier to frequent or regular use because the software is not part of the natural flow of daily activities. Real-time communication between mentors and mentees is possible based upon how the platform is built, but building this functionality may be too expensive for the mentoring program.</p>	<p>Advantage – American teenagers (13 to 18 years old) spend about nine hours a day with entertainment media.¹ Texting or social media use for match communications facilitates frequent interaction because they are part of each person’s natural activities (e.g., 95 percent of teens have a smartphone or access to one, and 45 percent of teens report that they are online almost constantly;² over 75 percent of teens text and they send a large number of texts daily;³ the frequency of phone conversations is declining and about 25 percent of teens say they never talk on a cell phone;⁴ texting dominates teens’ communication choices, with 63 percent reporting they use texting to communicate with others every day,⁵ so adding sending texts to a mentor would be easy for adolescents to do; whereas, mentors may be using email at work, so emailing mentee(s) may be a more natural activity during the day for them). The use of existing technologies could facilitate real-time communication between mentors and mentees.</p>
Cost	<p>Disadvantage – Developing a software application or mobile app for an e-mentoring program could be extremely expensive and a multi-year project that could run into the millions of dollars. This could compromise the budget of the mentoring program and significantly delay its launch. Maintenance and updates to such software can also be expensive.</p>	<p>Advantage – Allowing match members to interact using their natural forms of electronic communication is cost effective. By doing so, e-mentoring programs can focus their effort and budget on activities such as staff training and professional development; program administration; and match recruitment, screening, training, monitoring, and support, rather than on software development.</p>
Curriculum	<p>Advantage – Curriculum-based activities can be integrated into the custom software and delivered to the match on an as-needed basis.</p>	<p>Disadvantage – Use of a curriculum may be more cumbersome and less flexible (e.g., can still use a document sharing platform, but it may have less functionality).</p>
Recruitment	<p>Advantage – Recruitment messages that advertise the safety and monitoring features of a custom technology built for the purpose of supporting a mentoring program may be more attractive to some potential participants. Volunteers may be reassured that they will get a lot of support and guidance because someone is engaged and watching their relationship development efforts. Parents or guardians of mentees may be attracted to a program that has strong focus on child safety.</p>	<p>Advantage – Recruitment messages that address the benefits of use of a common method of technology may be attractive. Some benefits include familiarity, ease of use, and relative ease of integration into one’s day-to-day life.</p>

<p>Screening</p>	<p>Advantage – Mentoring and mentee applications, screening tools or questionnaires, and interviews can seamlessly be integrated into the software application for completion by mentors, mentees, and/or parents/guardians. Screening measures can be automatically scored and interpreted to facilitate use by program staff members.</p> <p>Disadvantage - Creating this functionality and obtaining licenses to use screening tools can be expensive.</p>	<p>Advantage – Purchasing single uses of screening tools or questionnaires can be cost-effective.</p> <p>Disadvantage – Deployment and tracking of completion of screening tools would require logging in and using an independent software system.</p>
<p>Monitoring</p>	<p>Advantage – The software could be built to allow for capturing all of the communications between mentors and mentees. If all of the mentoring interactions occur in the context of a closed software platform or system, then program staff members can observe and monitor all match interactions. Furthermore, algorithms can be written to screen for unsafe or unhelpful interactions, which can be useful for planning match support contacts.</p> <p>Disadvantage – Having an outsider observe all mentoring interactions could be off-putting to both match members. Feeling as if they have no privacy in their relationship can hinder the development of a close relationship between mentors and mentees. It may also be time consuming and expensive to read or watch all match activities.</p>	<p>Advantage – Use of software that does not allow for monitoring all match interactions and activities is similar to traditional community-based mentoring. This more natural monitoring arrangement could support the development of a close, enduring relationship.</p> <p>Some software platforms allow for monitoring of communications by an administrator, which could have the advantages suggested for custom-built technology that allows for constant monitoring.</p> <p>Disadvantage – If match communications are conducted using commonly used technology such as texting or telephone calls or video chats, then the program may not be able to directly observe match interactions. Mentoring program staff have often expressed the wish to be a “fly on the wall” and able to observe matches interacting with one another. They feel limited in providing support because everything they typically know about the match is based upon the reports of match members and parents/guardians, who filter information through their own lenses. Match support could miss important information that could compromise the safety and well-being of mentors or mentees.</p>
<p>Support</p>	<p>Advantage – With access to real-time and archival data on match interactions and activities, mentoring program staff can respond more quickly when they perceive problems are arising in the mentoring relationship or the lives of mentees. Staff can also provide mentors with ongoing training when they are able to monitor comments and interactions with their mentees to help mentors to be more effective.</p>	<p>Advantage – If the mentoring program purchases or obtains access to a platform that allows for an administrator view of match communications, then match support may be enhanced.</p> <p>Disadvantage – Program staff might rely on telephone calls or emails with mentors, mentees, and parents or guardians to provide match support. The information they obtain in these contacts will likely be abbreviated and incomplete, not in real time, and filtered through the eyes of the informant.</p>



Building social capital	Advantage - The custom software could be built to enhance network building, such as allowing for and supporting online interactions of mentees with other mentors and mentees. This can help mentees to build their social capital, support system, and affinity groups.	Disadvantage - Commonly used technologies may not have the capability of networking mentees with other mentors and mentees to help support building their social capital.
Evaluation	Advantage - By having a back-end database containing all match interactions, programs can conduct basic research on the relationship factors that may be associated with match and youth outcomes. Because this is an archival database, it could reduce the data collection burden on mentors, mentees, parents/guardians, and program staff members. Also, archival data, by definition, will be more reliable than self-report data.	Disadvantage - Without a back-end database that contains all match interactions, information about match activities and interactions will need to be collected. This adds a burden on match members and program staff members. Also, this self-report data on factors such as interaction frequency, duration, discussions, and activities are filtered through the lens of the informant and will be, by definition, less reliable than archival data.
PRIVACY	Advantage - Program will have more control over privacy settings; however, could be expensive to monitor and manage attempts to phish or hack or other threats to the database in the software.	Advantage - Individuals in the match may have more control over privacy settings. The cost of monitoring and managing possible phishing or hacking attempts or other threats is handled by the vendor.

In addition to the many issues to consider with respect to selection of the type of software that will be used in an e-mentoring program, there are also issues to consider when selecting the hardware device(s) to be used in the program. For example, the program needs to choose whether mentees can access the software on any hardware. If the software platform is only installed on a computer in school, then it is only accessible during the school day, which limits when mentees can access their mentors. In contrast, if the program allows matches to use any hardware device or commonly available devices, such as phone-to-phone texting services, then mentees can contact their mentors outside of program hours. Thus, there are advantages and disadvantages associated with defining the hardware devices required for program participation. Furthermore, there are also advantages and disadvantages associated with

supplying versus not supplying hardware devices for program participants. For example, there is a large digital equality gap in the ownership of computers, tablets, and smartphones, with children in low-income homes being significantly less likely to have access to hardware devices in their homes compared to wealthier peers. For example, 78 percent of teens from high-income homes own a smartphone, where only 51 percent of teens from low income homes own a smartphone.⁶ The main advantage when devices (and internet access) are provided to participants is that program eligibility is not restricted to those with the financial resources to provide them for themselves. A disadvantage of the mentoring program providing hardware devices to match members is that the program would need to purchase an insurance policy to cover potential theft or damage to devices to protect their investment. Another issue regarding hardware



is that if the mentoring program requires use of specific hardware devices but does not supply them to match members, then it is highly likely that the pool of eligible match members will be narrowed.

There is no one best solution for the type of e-mentoring software and hardware technology adopted by the field of e-mentoring; and the same conclusion holds for each mentoring program that needs to decide which solution is best for them at each stage of their development as an organization. These decisions will be based upon many factors such as their budget, ease of use of different hardware and software devices, the timing of availability of software services, the age and type of mentors and mentees eligible for program participation, and the mentoring program's model and goals. When choosing or building the right technology for the program, there are several important criteria to consider, which are discussed below.

Aligning with the Program's Theory of Change and Desired Outcomes for Youth

The first and most important issue is that the technology must align with the mentoring program's theory of change and the requirements of the program. First, what program participants are expected to do together through the e-mentoring program will contribute to the decision about what technology is needed. For example, if the program requires participants to complete activities together, this will likely require mentors and mentees to see one another via video (or in a virtual world) to fully participate. As another example, for e-mentoring programs in which mentees complete an activity or task and then write to their mentor about the experience, asynchronous technology may meet the needs of the program.

Second, the desired outcomes of the program will also impact the selection of the technology best suited to the program. For example, an e-mentoring program may have the goal of improving mentees' reading and writing skills. In this case, text-based technology may be most beneficial for program participants. If the goals of the program are more diffuse and predicated on the development of a close relationship between the mentor and mentee, programs may want to offer multiple ways of connecting to one another (e.g., video, email, texting) in order to support the development of this relationship.⁷ For example, one STEM online group mentoring program for girls utilized a members-only platform that allowed participants to communicate using internal email, a forum, and chat functionality. This platform was found to support the development of effective group e-mentoring relationships.⁸

A key consideration relevant to the theory of change is the level of oversight of program participants needed to effectively support the program's goals or if the program is designed for vulnerable populations of youth; this oversight can include monitoring the activities and conversations between participants. A closed system in which program participants log in to complete activities or communicate with staff or their partners may be needed if the program determines it is necessary to review all the interactions between participants. This intense level of oversight and monitoring could be required in order to protect the safety of participants, or to assess if participants are engaging in the activities required by the program and working toward the desired outcomes. For example, e-mentoring programs that are integrated into a school or classroom and facilitated by a teacher may opt to use a closed system so the teacher facilitator can review the communications

between the mentee and mentor to determine if the mentee is communicating effectively and learning the required material. (For an example of a program that monitors communications in this way, see the brief E-Mentoring in Action snapshot below about the iCouldBe program.)

Programs working with mentees from more vulnerable groups (such as victims of sex trafficking, youth with chronic illness or serious disabilities, very young mentees) may also determine a closed system is necessary given the vulnerabilities of these groups to coercive, negative influences. The software chosen to support the program could set up mentors to do harm if they cannot read verbal

cues or there is a lapse in response time when mentees disclose something important.

Programs must also weigh how important it is for program participants to be able to observe nonverbal cues when communicating with their partner when selecting technology. Video-based communication platforms allow program participants to better observe nonverbal cues. These platforms may be particularly important for e-mentoring programs that aim to have participants improve nonverbal skills or programs that are concerned the absence of such cues will impact program effectiveness.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION: **KEEPING AN EYE ON PARTICIPANT MESSAGES IN THE iCouldBe PROGRAM**

The core of the iCouldBe program is a research-backed curriculum that takes mentees and mentors on a shared journey through online activities and relationship-building conversation areas. The curriculum incorporates inspiring graphics, quotes, videos, informative content, and helpful resources to engage mentees and mentors on a holistic level. The iCouldBe curriculum leverages “gamification” concepts to help mentees engage in self-reflection while imagining their future through practical steps. Several primary missions include “quests” with related sets of activities designed to build, practice, and demonstrate the comprehension of new skills.

Matched mentees and mentors participate in asynchronous conversations that allow busy mentors to participate from any location at any time, significantly growing mentor recruitment pools and increasing mentee-mentor engagement. After matched mentees and mentors respond to one another, automated emails or text messages are sent prompting participants to log in and reply at their earliest convenience.

To ensure the safety of all participants, advanced filtering systems constantly operate in the background as mentees and mentors share information and respond to activities. Filters, created and updated by iCouldBe, block and flag personally identifiable information, inappropriate content, and any content that may be an indication of danger to the mentee; all filters are reviewed daily by program staff. If blocked or flagged content is posted by a mentee, program staff review it and take immediate action as needed. If blocked or flagged content is posted by a mentor, program staff will contact the mentor directly as needed to resolve any issues.



In addition to the automated filters, mentors can directly contact program staff or teachers should they have any concerns about their mentee. For issues of high concern requiring urgent and immediate attention, a built-in emergency alert system can be used by mentors to automatically alert all levels of program and executive staff as well as the mentee’s teacher. Program staff immediately reach out to school staff to confirm they are aware of the issue and to ensure the safety of the mentee. School policies are followed to protect the mentee and ensure all mandated steps are implemented.

To support mentees and mentors, data science tools have been developed and embedded in the back-end administrative platform. Staff and teachers have access to the data science tools and all related data visualizations to measure and track mentee and mentor participation — both quantitatively and qualitatively.

For any timeframe (weekly, monthly, full program year, etc.), four data points measure mentee participation and program progress: number of log-ins and posts to activities, number of activity posts, average number of words in every activity post, and number of activities started/completed. Each data point is weighted according to its significance in mentees reaching program outcomes; these outcomes are based on an analysis of 15 years of mentee participation and online behavioral statistics.

Similarly, weighted mentor data points measure mentor engagement with their mentees: number of log-ins, number of activity posts, average number of words in every activity post, the ratio of reciprocated posts between mentors and mentees (to ensure meaningful conversations between the match members occur) and the average number of days it takes mentors to reply to mentees. The weighted data points for mentees and mentors generate color-coded “scores” to display simple data visualizations that program staff can easily act upon: Green = Celebrate, Yellow = Encourage, and Red = Extra Support.

The required speed and frequency of interaction between program participants can also inform the selection of technology.⁹ If the theory of change includes providing mentees with efficient, real-time support, then the technology should allow mentors to receive communication from their mentees as easily as possible such as through text message, email, or a push notification on their cell phone. For example, mentees may send an urgent question to their mentor regarding how to handle a specific situation and expect to receive a quick response. In other programs, this type of real-time support may not be expected of program participants to help build the relationship and have an influence on the desired outcomes.

Aligning with Users’ Abilities, Literacy, and Technology Access

Another major consideration when selecting technology for an e-mentoring program is the characteristics of the program participants, such as their abilities, access to technology, and technology literacy. The demands of the program and challenges with using the technology employed need to align with the abilities of the program participants.¹⁰ E-mentoring programs have demonstrated great promise for reaching populations that have traditionally been excluded from mentoring due to limitations in their ability to consistently meet in-person with a mentor.^{11,12} These



limitations may be due to physical or cognitive disabilities, illness, or location, among many others. For example, e-mentoring programs have demonstrated promise in connecting individuals with disabilities with a mentor.¹³ For mentoring programs that include mentees with low literacy skills, technology that utilizes video may be the preferred method of communication to help reduce the impact of these skills on the ability of the mentee to participate. Programs should also consider technology such as speech-to-text and text-to-speech, which may help individuals with lower writing or reading skills to participate.

Technology access can be a significant barrier to participation in e-mentoring programs and should be considered when selecting technology for facilitating an e-mentoring program. In the United States, the proliferation and prevalence of smartphones, laptops, tablets, and other devices has allowed for individuals to connect with others through a wide range of devices, social media, and channels. Also, access to Wi-Fi and reduction in the cost of texting and other data plans has reduced problems with accessibility to the internet and apps. However, there are still many who lack access to technology or who may have components of the technology, such as a cell phone, but do not have services, such as cellular data or Wi-Fi access, to take full advantage of the technology. This may be particularly true for young people who are among the target audience of mentees. Disruptions in communication between program participants due to an unreliable computer or cell phone or disconnected internet, among other issues, can cause significant frustration and threaten the development of an effective mentoring relationship. Thus, e-mentoring programs need to be familiar with their target populations and their populations' level of technology access, ensuring they are able

to provide support to program participants who have limited access or select technology that will be accessible to their participants.

Finally, the levels of technology literacy among program participants should also be considered when selecting technology for an e-mentoring program. Ideally, the technology platform chosen by the program would offer a range of functions (e.g., easy sign-on, video, chat, discussion boards) and support (e.g., easy password reset, online tutorials, live chat, easily accessible email support) that help meet the goals of the program and support the participation of participants who have significant variability in their technology skills. Platforms that feature an intuitive user interface and helpful tutorials can support the engagement of participants with lower levels of technology literacy. Training for mentors and mentees by the mentoring program should also address how to use the technology, with the option for additional training for program participants who need more support in getting started. For more insights and recommendations regarding preparing participants for the e-mentoring experience, see Theme 3: Preparing Participants for Good Online Interactions.

Aligning with Partners' Technology Systems and Policies and Procedures

E-mentoring programs that work in close partnership with schools or other organizations must consider the potential integration of software systems when selecting a technology platform — as well as the policies and procedures of any partner organizations — to ensure the technology will meet all of the necessary requirements. Integrating a mentoring software platform into a school setting may have additional requirements due to FERPA (see following Table 2) and school policies regarding internet use by students, as well as challenges

navigating the school’s firewall and other security software. There may also be parents’ rules about the amounts and types of screen time they allow for their children. In addition, the policies and procedures of the partner organization may require that all communications between mentees and mentors be monitored by program staff. In this case, administrative monitoring would be a requirement for the selection of the software platform. Furthermore, the partner organization may utilize its own technology for tracking mentoring program participants and would prefer their system integrate with the e-mentoring program’s technology. How and whether these systems can be integrated should be considered when selecting technology.

Federal and Legal Compliance Issues

A summary of laws, statutes, and government policies that are relevant to e-mentoring programs can be seen in Table 2. Each of these issues has specific implications related to the use of software for communication purposes. Because of the rise in security breaches, hacking attempts, viruses, phishing, spyware, and other technology security risks, both U.S. and international governments have taken notice and created laws and regulations regarding use of data. Furthermore, with the proliferation of computers and other technology, laws and regulations have also been written to make software accessible to users with disabilities. These and other issues are discussed below.

TABLE 2. BRIEF OVERVIEW OF LAWS, STATUTES, AND GOVERNMENT POLICIES RELEVANT TO E-MENTORING PROGRAMS

ACCESSIBILITY			
Law, statute, or policy	What is it?	What is its purpose	How is it relevant to e-mentoring
Section 508	A federal law that is an amendment to the United States Workforce Rehabilitation Act of 1973	It mandates all electronic and information technology developed, procured, maintained, or used by the federal government be accessible to people with disabilities.	Although there are advanced technical skills and knowledge associated with compliance with these standards (and may not be required if your mentoring program is not funded by the U.S. federal government or through state grants), achieving 508 compliance is becoming the norm in software development, avoids potential changes in the law that make noncompliance problematic, and provides an opportunity to offer your e-mentoring program to both mentors and mentees with a disability.
Web Content Accessibility Guidelines of the World Wide Web Consortium	Standards created by an industry consortium	It provides international standards for websites, web applications, browsers, and other tools so that people with disabilities can use them. It is also designed to benefit people without disabilities. It is the basis for 508 compliance.	

PRIVACY

Law, statute, or policy	What is it?	What is its purpose	How is it relevant to e-mentoring
COPPA	Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act enacted by Congress in 1998 requiring the Federal Trade Commission to issue and enforce regulations concerning children's online privacy. Rules were put in place in 2000 and amended in 2013.	It is a law regarding how online operators of commercial websites, online services, and mobile apps notify parents and obtain their consent before collecting any personal information on children under the age of 13.	This law probably applies to e-mentoring programs serving children under the age of 13. The law focuses on commercial software services; however, even proprietary software applications developed by schools or nonprofit organizations probably integrate commercial software solutions or plug-ins, or have their data hosted on third-party servers. All federal websites and applications are COPPA compliant, so if a program's website or application was developed using federal funds, they will have to follow the Act. Thus, whatever software solution is used by a mentoring program, be it a custom platform that the program creates or something that is more publicly available, they will likely have to be COPPA compliant.
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996	It provides security provisions and data privacy to keep patients' medical information safe.	E-mentoring programs located in a health care organization or who partner with a health care organization will need to be conscious of HIPAA. This is particularly the case if the mentoring program collects data from health records to examine the effectiveness of its program on the health outcomes of mentees.
FERPA	Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act	It is a spending statute that requires educational institutions and agencies to obtain written permission from a parent or eligible student to release any educational information from the student's educational record.	E-mentoring programs located in an educational institution or agency or who partner with one may need to be conscious of FERPA. This is particularly the case if the mentoring program collects data from educational records to examine the effectiveness of its program on the educational outcomes of mentees.



PRIVACY

Law, statute, or policy	What is it?	What is its purpose	How is it relevant to e-mentoring
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation - Regulation (EU) 2016/679 of the European Parliament and of the Council	It is a set of rules designed to give citizens of the European Union (EU) more control over their personal data. It also aims to simplify the regulatory environment for business.	E-mentoring programs serving individuals who live in the EU have to be compliant with the GDPR. The key issues an e-mentoring program must address include the types of data that can be stored, processing of electronic data, information given to individuals whose data is being processed, how long and under what conditions data can be kept, and the technical and organizational safeguards that ensure data security.

Accessibility Considerations

E-mentoring programs should be familiar with the various technology accessibility laws and guidelines when selecting technology for the program. Funding sources and the populations served by the program will primarily determine what accessibility laws and guidelines are relevant to an e-mentoring program. For instance, some e-mentoring programs may be required to comply with Section 508, a component of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, that requires federal agencies to ensure that all electronic and information technology they develop, procure, maintain, or use is accessible to people with disabilities. This law is related to three federal laws: the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 255 of the Communications Act, and the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010. Section 508 includes websites and software, including educational and training programs, developed through any agency of the U.S. federal government. The Section 508 guidelines were recently updated and include the requirement that agencies follow the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) that were developed in

2008 to establish international standards for creating accessible web content.

Even if programs are not required to follow the Section 508 or the WCAG due to their funding, it is important to be aware of these guidelines and determine if they are relevant to a program's participants. There are 85.3 million people in the United States, or 27 percent of the population, who have a disability,¹⁴ and even if an e-mentoring program does not explicitly recruit mentors and mentees with a disability, it is very likely that these individuals are involved in these programs in some capacity. Thus, all e-mentoring programs should be aware of these guidelines and use them to evaluate any technology that is required for participating in the program. They should also be used to inform any decisions about technology that might be purchased or developed to support the program. Text-to-speech, speech-to-text, closed captioning, form controls, and distinguishable content are all examples of accessibility elements that may be beneficial or required for participants to fully engage in the e-mentoring program.



Some strategies e-mentoring programs might use to achieve 508 compliance include:

- 1. Learn the laws and requirements related to compliance.**
- 2. Hire an accessibility consultant.**
- 3. Begin by creating reasonable accommodations in software and documents.**
- 4. Create an accessibility plan and timeline.**

Privacy Issues

With recent breaches in security in some of our most trusted websites, the U.S. Congress and other non-U.S. regulatory bodies have enacted several laws that should be known by e-mentoring programs.

The first law that is relevant to privacy is COPPA, or the Children's Online Privacy and Protection Act, which has a number of requirements that protect the privacy of children. More important, it gives parents greater control over their children's access to the web and the collection of personally identifiable information (PII) about their children by commercial vendors. Parenthetically, PII is broadly defined by COPPA and includes a wide range of information about a child such as name, address, and Social Security number; photos, video, or audio files that contain a child's image or voice; username or screen name, if that information could be used to make contact with the child; geolocation information, such as street name and city or town; and what are called persistent identifiers that might allow a child to be tracked across time or websites. It is less clear whether COPPA also defines PII in terms of the metadata from their computer such as their IP (internet protocol) address, device identification number, or their browser. One thing to

There are a number of resources available to learn more about Section 508 compliance and the WCAG guidelines. A few website links are listed below for reference.

Section 508:

- <https://www.section508.gov/content/learn/laws-and-policies>
- <https://www.learningsolutionsmag.com/articles/2193/section-508-refresh-the-clock-is-ticking-on-elearning-accessibility-requirements>

WCAG 2.0:

- <https://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG20/>
- <https://www.w3.org/TR/2014/NOTE-WCAG20-TECHS-20140408/pdf.html>
- <https://www.w3.org/WAI/WCAG20/quickref/>

note is that COPPA concerns only the information children directly provide, but not the information that is collected about them. Thus, software that collect information from parents is not covered by COPPA, even if some of that information is about their children. It is hard to imagine an e-mentoring program that does not collect at least some of this information from child participants.

The requirements of the law include that commercial companies making websites, mobile apps, and other online tools for children under 13 years of age must provide notice and get active, verifiable parental consent before collecting information online from children. It is important to be aware of the fact



that the privacy policy has to be written in easy to understand terms and be posted on the website. Parents also have the right to prohibit companies from disclosing any information about their children to a third party (unless the disclosure is integral to the site or service, but this must be disclosed to parents as well). Furthermore, parents can have access to their children’s personal information and have all of their child’s information deleted. This last requirement may be the hardest one for a small program to implement, given the labor involved in deleting information from back-ups or data files. In addition, companies must have a “clear and comprehensive” privacy policy. Finally, software companies must keep all of the information they collect from and about children confidential and secure. Even though this law does not directly regulate the websites of schools, state government agencies, or nonprofit organizations, many of these organizations use third party vendors for software functions or data hosting. Use of a third-party vendor may result in a nonprofit organization conducting an e-mentoring program needing to be COPPA compliant.

If the e-mentoring program is taking place in a school context, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) does allow schools to give consent on behalf of parents; however, legally, it is risky. Because the legal basis for providing permission for children to access software on the internet and for the software to retain PII is unclear, Recommendation 2.10 states that parents or guardians should provide explicit permission from parents. In fact, the FTC encourages nonprofit organizations to post their privacy policies online and provide COPPA protections for child visitors in their web applications and other software. Similarly, U.S. federal policy has required that all websites and software services operated by the federal

government and contractors operating on behalf of federal agencies comply with COPPA. Hence, COPPA is wide-reaching and broadly applied, even when it is not legally required or the legal precedent is not clear.

Some strategies that an e-mentoring program can use to be COPPA compliant include:

- 1. Create a privacy policy with respect to children in the program under 13 years of age.**
- 2. Publicly post the privacy policy describing what information is collected from children in the program, how that information is used, whether information collected from children is disclosed and to whom, contact information for any third parties that may also be collecting information through the program’s website or web application, and how parents can have information about their children deleted from the software system.**
- 3. Choose the third-party software carefully or keep COPPA in mind when developing proprietary software.**
- 4. Provide parents with complete information about what software and other tools are used in the program.**
- 5. When recruiting new mentees into the program, obtain active, verifiable parental consent prior to having mentees or prospective mentees provide the program with any PII.**
- 6. Consult with an attorney who is an expert in COPPA and who can help develop the program’s privacy policies and procedures.**

There are two other laws that are relevant to different types of e-mentoring programs in the United States. One has to do with programs that

If you are interested in learning more, additional information about COPPA can be found here:

- <https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/complying-coppa-frequently-asked-questions>
- Electronic Code of Federal Regulations – Children’s Online Privacy & Protection Act
http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=ad417dd5af1c499aa56467636227509e&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title16/16cfr312_main_02.tpl
- FTC COPPA Rule
<https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/rules/rulemakingregulatoryreform-proceedings/childrensonline-privacyprotectionrule>
- Federal Register
<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR201301-17/pdf/201231341.pdf>
- FTC Press Release about changes to COPPA
<https://www.ftc.gov/newsevents/press-releases/2012/12/ftc-strengthens-kids-privacy-gives-parents-greater-control-over>

have health-related data, and the other relates to programs situated in educational settings.

FERPA, or the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, was designed to protect the privacy of the education records of students and prevent the improper disclosure of PII from educational

records. The federal agency with oversight of this statute is the U.S. Department of Education (DoED), and because it is a spending statute (“no funds shall be made available . . .”), DoED can encourage compliance only through the threat of discontinuing federal funding to an educational institution. Individual parents and students may not file a federal lawsuit against an educational agency or institution for a FERPA violation; however, they may be able to sue in state court. FERPA covers the actions of anyone with access to students’ educational records, and a FERPA violation occurs if a student’s education records are released to any unauthorized persons. The statute requires that education institutions and agencies obtain written permission from a parent or eligible student (age 18 or over) to release any information from a student’s education record. If a mentoring program is housed in an educational institution or agency, then it will be subject to FERPA and cannot examine any educational records without written parental permission. Data also may be used for monitoring mentees’ educational functioning during the mentoring relationship and be useful to match support staff when having contact with match members during the life of the relationship.

Just like FERPA was designed to safeguard educational records, HIPAA was designed to safeguard health records of patients and strictly control when Protected Health Information (PHI) is divulged and to whom. Since the Enforcement Final Rule of 2006, OCR has had the power to issue financial penalties (and/or corrective action plans) to covered entities that fail to comply with HIPAA Rules. The Privacy Rule applies to any health provider, health plan, or health care clearinghouse that transmits health information in electronic form that are considered covered entities. In order for a covered entity to disclose any health information that is not for treatment or payment of health



Additional information about FERPA can be found here:

- Electronic Code of Federal Regulations Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
https://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title34/34cfr99_main_02.tpl
- U.S. Department of Education -Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

care (to an e-mentoring program, for example), written authorization needs to be obtained first. The authorization must be in plain language and contain specific details about the information that is being shared, the person or persons receiving the information, and the right to revoke in writing access to the data, among other items. E-mentoring programs located in a health care organization or who partner with a health care organization will need to be conscious of HIPAA and the sharing of PHI with staff and mentors. This situation is particularly the case if the mentoring program collects data from health records to examine the effectiveness of its program on the health outcomes of mentees. Data also may be used for monitoring mentees' health functioning during the mentoring relationship and be useful to match support staff when having contact with match members during the life of the relationship.

Some strategies that an e-mentoring program might use to be FERPA or HIPAA compliant are similar to those described above for COPPA. The key one is to obtain written parent permission to obtain and use

any records from an educational institution or health care organization.

Finally, for e-mentoring programs in the European Union (EU) or providing services to residents in the EU, compliance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) is relevant. Some reasons why GDPR was developed was to create a unified law and set of rules that would apply across the EU in order to simplify the process of compliance for businesses, clarify the rights of EU citizens, and save money by having one supervisory authority. In GDPR, personal data are broadly defined, as they are in U.S. laws, to include anything from a name, to a photo, to an email address, or even a computer IP address. Given this broad definition, GDPR appears to be relevant to almost any public-facing organization that collects personal data about or from EU citizens, and this relevance is regardless of the software's country of origin. Furthermore, businesses and organizations that process private or sensitive data are required to ask for consent and permission each and every time they access the data; thus, there is no such thing as a continuous blanket consent. Each time data are used for a new purpose, a new request for consent is required. Furthermore, GDPR also clarifies something called the "right to be forgotten," which gives people the right to have their data deleted and destroyed from an organization's database. In addition, citizens have the right to access their personal data and information that is saved in the database. Thus, whatever software system is developed or used

Additional information about HIPAA can be found here:

- HIPAA privacy rule
<https://www.hhs.gov/hipaa/for-professionals/privacy/laws-regulations/index.html>



Additional information about GDPR can be found here:

- <https://eugdpr.org/>
- https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/law-topic/data-protection_en

needs to be designed with these capabilities in mind.

The penalties for failure to comply with GDPR are severe and carry significant risk for a company or organization. Thus, e-mentoring programs should work with an attorney to develop their policies and web application to be GDPR compliant. In addition, other countries are moving toward instituting new or changing software and internet privacy laws since GDPR was released. News reports suggest that privacy laws are being reviewed by legislative bodies in countries such as Brazil, Japan, South Korea, and India to include GDPR requirements. Thus, international e-mentoring programs operating in these and other countries need to be aware that privacy has become an important legal issue around the world, so they need to monitor the activities of their legislative bodies to avoid being taken by surprise by changes that may impact their software design or consent procedures.

Based upon this overview of relevant laws, statutes, and polices related to the use of web-based applications and software for e-mentoring programs, another recommendation that programs should consider is to have privacy policies in place that are GDPR compliant and insurance coverage related to potential data breaches.

Technical Support

A final consideration is the level of technical support that will be required for the technology platform.

Any technology selected for use by an e-mentoring program will require some level of technical support for both staff and program participants. Difficulties signing into the communication platform, lost passwords, incompatible media, and outdated software or hardware are a few of the issues that can hamper participants' ability to fully engage in an e-mentoring program. These challenges could impact the development of the mentoring relationship. When evaluating the various technology platform options for e-mentoring, programs should determine if they have the staff and financial resources to support the implementation of the technology and the program participants who will be using the technology. If the program is not able to support participants in troubleshooting these problems and challenges, they should look to other forms of technology to achieve the goals of the e-mentoring program.

How Technology Considerations Pay Off in the Long Run

There are many factors, concerns, and laws to consider in the choice of hardware and software technology for a new e-mentoring program. Although it seems daunting at first, these issues parallel the same decisions that in-person mentoring programs have to think through and figure out as well. Regardless of the mode of communication between mentors and mentees, all mentoring programs need safety- and research-based policies, procedures, tools, and resources to meet their goals and the needs of their participants. Smart, well-thought decisions at this stage of program development will make all the difference later on in terms of implementation fidelity, ease of use, and participant experience, and the fit between what the technology is capable of and the needs and wants of program participants.



MAJOR THEME 2

Recruiting and Matching the Right Participants

Selecting and building an appropriate communication platform for mentors and mentees is just the first step in providing a quality e-mentoring experience. Programs must also recruit the right individuals to participate in the program and ensure they are connected to appropriate mentors, getting relationships off to a good start. There are many recommendations in this guide that are focused on getting the right people into the program, making sure they can access and use the technology in the ways intended, and facilitating connections across participants. This section will discuss the many different examples and approaches we noted for these practices in e-mentoring in both the research literature reviewed and in conversations with our Working Group.

But there is another layer to this “participant” recruitment that is worth calling out specifically: The recruitment of host sites and implementation partners by the program itself. One of the interesting features of e-mentoring programs is that they can have an easier time taking their service to scale, often across wide geographic areas, compared to in-person programs. The online technology platforms of these programs can often be implemented just about anywhere that has reliable internet access. In other cases, the program uses technology, such as cell phones, provided by the end users themselves. And while e-mentoring programs often have a “home office” where the program leadership works and the platform is developed and maintained, that office location does not necessarily need to be tied to the location

of program services. In fact, some e-mentoring programs have no real physical “locations” at all, as each participant joins remotely using their own technology in a completely de-centralized experience (for example, the Camp Zora virtual world detailed by Cantrell and colleagues).¹⁵ This means that many e-mentoring programs can scale their services across regions easily, as they are often not as burdened by “brick and mortar” facility costs.

But in many of the models we encountered, there was some in-person interaction (particularly with youth) in the delivery of the program. In these cases, the “staffing” of the delivery program was often a combination of individuals working for the program itself and on-the-ground implementers working for the host organization or institution partnering with the program. We saw numerous examples in the literature of programs that were developed and managed remotely but had partnered with schools (or individual classrooms) or other youth-serving organizations across wide regions (for example, the Digital Heroes Campaign described by Rhodes and colleagues). In these instances, the host site does not need to invent a mentoring program so much as commit staffing and infrastructure, and often access to the youth themselves, to bring in an existing program.

This circumstance led to the development of two new Benchmarks in the Recruitment Standard in this supplement, **B.1.8** and **B.1.9**. The first of these notes that programs should limit their recruitment to program locations or organizations that can demonstrate the staff capacity, resources, and commitment to implementing the program with full fidelity; and the second addresses the content of messages used to recruit program partners. In many instances, program partners may want to know why e-mentoring is a preferred option for the goals of

the program or how well it fits with the needs of the young people they will bring to the program. These potential sites will also be curious as to how their own staff will play a role in facilitating the program and managing the relationships. There might be special concerns from site to site about issues of youth safety, data safety, and confidentiality that the program will need to address. Each partnership will raise its own questions, but programs are well advised to develop strong recruitment messages at the organizational, in addition to the individual mentor, level. For a great real-world example of how an e-mentoring program convinces teachers that

their program will be a good fit for their classroom, and all the ways the program will make their role easier, see the case study about the programs run by Cricket Media below.

These new Benchmarks encourage programs to think about what messages will convince partners that e-mentoring relationships will have value to the youth served and the partner organization, while also ensuring that potential partners are well aware of their obligations, roles, and responsibilities in hosting and supporting the program.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION:

E-MENTORING IN ACTION: EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO IMPLEMENT A QUALITY MENTORING EXPERIENCE

Cricket Media® (CM), cricketmedia.com, has found providing purposeful e-mentoring with younger students (third through fifth grades) expands their worldview and increases their academic skills, helping them be better positioned to realize their personal and academic potential. CM has two e-mentoring programs for this age group: Cricket Together (CT), which focuses on interdisciplinary literacy and TryEngineering Together (TET), which focuses on STEM (and was created in partnership with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers). Knowing personal relationships fuel learning relationships, Cricket Media programs provide each student with their own e-mentor who commits to a full academic year of correspondence, giving adequate time to develop a meaningful relationship through written correspondence. Since exchanging ideas in writing and learning digitally may be new skills for young students, in-person teachers are fundamental to successful implementation of these mentoring programs.

Teachers determine the cadence of letter exchanges, select the subjects of the units, approve all incoming and outgoing communication, and reinforce the programmatic curriculum with in-classroom discussions, editing, and related learning activities. All of these activities work together to support the building of the virtual learning friendships. Since teachers are so important to the programs' success, CM has devoted much time and attention to attracting, selecting, training, and supporting teachers.

Although e-mentors are a powerful incentive for teachers who value reading and writing and community engagement, CM understands teachers will not devote classroom time to e-mentoring unless the e-mentoring programs directly support their instructional priorities. To attract and empower teachers and make it a win-win, CM has worked with former CT and TET program teachers and national literacy



experts to refine its content and teaching strategies to align directly with third to fifth grade teachers' instructional priorities. Through informal feedback, CM learned teachers appreciate the opportunity to increase their students' digital literacy and social skills.

Teachers want students to become independent learners, and CM provides a host of resources specifically for students, including a library of dozens of articles, accessible 24/7, on the platform. Teachers are empowered with a customizable curriculum; an easy-to-use platform that enables safe, convenient, community engagement; individualized instruction; prescreened and prequalified e-mentors; rich professional development resources and opportunities; and ongoing program support, including real time notifications and an easy-to-use moderation dashboard.

Teachers learn about and apply to the programs through the CT and TET websites (www.crickettogether.com) and (www.tryengineeringtogether.com). The application process is designed to attract teachers in underserved communities who have the experience and skills to implement the CT and TET programs and view bringing virtual role models/e-mentors into their classrooms as important. Teachers fill out an online application identifying their teaching expertise and academic background, school and classroom description, and explain why they think the CT and TET programs would support their classroom instruction. Teachers are asked to confirm their students have sufficient ongoing access to digital devices and bandwidth to communicate regularly. If teachers meet the screening requirements, they are asked to respond to a more targeted set of questions on video via SparkHire explaining why they want to be a program teacher. CM looks for experienced teachers who are technology savvy and have worked with community members or express a strong desire to do so. CM reviews the full application and notifies teachers of their decision status.

Once teachers are selected, the CM Program Coordinator begins building personal relationships with the teachers to understand each individual teacher's work and learning style. The Program Coordinator ensures teachers understand their responsibilities, know how to get support, and help identify and put in place other elements fundamental to successful implementation. Once the mechanics are in place, teachers are trained by attending interactive 1:1 video conferences. The Program Coordinator often supplements those sessions to help teachers customize their implementation to the needs of their particular classroom. In addition to the "how" of the platform and the "why" of the platform resources, teachers are instructed on how to use the many resources available to them and their students on the platform.

A key aspect of the Program Coordinator's work with teachers and e-mentors is to remind them to communicate regularly. In addition to being available upon request, the Program Coordinator has online office hours, weekly check-ins, and coordinates automatic email notifications, platform notifications and instructions to teachers and e-mentors.



Recommendations for Participant Recruitment

Many of the recommendations around the recruitment of mentors, youth, and occasionally parents and guardians mirror the basic ideas presented in the core *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, but with a technology twist based on the communication platform used by the program.

In general, mentoring programs should realistically portray the e-mentoring experience to mentors and youth, which can help reduce feelings of unmet or unrealistic expectations around the experience down the road. There are a few additional nuances for recruiting to an e-mentoring program:

- Convincing participants that mentoring virtually is not only a fun and enjoyable experience (**B.1.1 #1; B.1.6 #10**), but that this type of mentoring is actually a preferred form of support that has many advantages over in-person mentoring, specifically for supporting the needs of the young people in the program (**B.1.1 #2; B.1.6 #11; B.1.2 #5**). Some participants may be skeptical that e-mentoring can be as rich and a rewarding experience as face-to-face interactions, while others may be intrigued by the flexibility of participation and the ability to craft thoughtful responses. Programs are encouraged to think about how they can convince all participants that this approach to mentoring is not only impactful, but also enjoyable and personally rewarding.
- Recruitment messages need to ensure participants that they will have access to the required technology and that any concerns they have about using the technology will be alleviated (**B.1.1 #3 and #4; B.1.6, #9**). Both prospective mentors and youth will ideally bring some experience and comfort level using the relevant technology to

the program (**B.1.3 #6 and #7**), which can greatly reduce concerns individuals may have about participating. But youth and parents in particular may need special reassurance that the program has strong safety policies and procedures (**B.1.6 #8**) that are equivalent, if not stronger, than the safety practices found in traditional in-person mentoring programs.

As internet-based communication technologies become increasingly ubiquitous in modern society, it may become easier to recruit participants to e-mentoring programs. The idea of forming a close, rewarding relationship with someone you might never meet in person is certainly less extraordinary than it was even just a decade ago, as platforms such as Facebook have acclimated several generations to the possibility of finding meaningful connections globally through online dialogue. The task for recruitment then becomes convincing participants this is a great fit for them. Common “selling points” noted in the literature include the ability to prepare and send thoughtful, detailed responses asynchronously using technology,^{17,18} the ability to overcome shyness and social anxiety in personal relationships,^{19,20} and the ability to disclose personal information (such as disability status) at one’s own pace and comfort level.²¹ While the research literature certainly noted some of the frustrations mentors and youth had communicating online only, there were also many examples where participants noted liking the asynchronous nature of the communication and felt it offered as much of a “shield” protecting their vulnerability as it did a “barrier” that prevented a close relationship.²²

Screening Participants

The screening practices recommended for e-mentoring programs build on these recruitment criteria and areas of emphasis by ensuring that

participants can access and effectively use the technology required by the program.

Some e-mentoring programs provide youth or mentors with the hardware and internet access they will need to participate — think here of a company that allows their employees to virtually mentor youth from the workplace or a school classroom that provides computers and access to the e-mentoring platform to students. In other cases, it is up to participants to ensure they can provide or access the relevant technology themselves. This may involve ensuring they have a sufficiently fast internet connection (especially in programs that involve streaming video or interactions in virtual worlds), specific hardware (such as a webcam), or specific software (e.g., Skype for videoconferencing). Some of these factors may be challenging for some participants to meet, and programs are encouraged to set criteria for the minimal technology and access needed to participate in the program (**B.2.1 #1a; B.2.8 #7**) and make these parameters very clear to participants during the recruitment and screening processes. Using the technology employed by the program to facilitate the application process (**B.2.2 #3; E.2.7 #13**) and screening steps such as the interview (**B.2.3 #4**) can help programs determine whether the applicant can simply log-in and participate at the level of proficiency needed by the program.

The other aspect of screening mentors beyond simple technology access is technology *comfort*. While it is true, as noted above, that generations are increasingly comfortable and competent using technology to communicate, it is also true that many individuals are not as good at it as they might think. Some individuals do not like to, or struggle to, share complicated thoughts in written form. Some can communicate via technology but prefer

a personal interaction that allows them to feel more connected and read nonverbal cues. Others may not be comfortable putting personal disclosures in writing or have trouble interpreting the written thoughts of others. In e-mentoring programs that use written communication, such as email or texting, simple literacy can be a barrier to participation. Thus, several recommendations here encourage mentoring programs to assess the comfort level and competency of mentors and youth in communicating using the technology employed by the program throughout the application and screening processes (**B.2.1 #1b and #1c; B.2.8 # 8 and #9; E.2.7 #12**).

Programs will need to determine if a potential participant's discomfort or communication capabilities can be improved with pre-match and ongoing training and coaching, or if their challenges would be disqualifying from the program. In most instances, training can teach participants how to be much more effective in their online communications, but there were studies we reviewed suggesting that some participants, older adult mentors in particular, are just not great at communicating virtually.²³ Red flags to look for include an overly formal and distant tone, the use of vague questions easily ignored by their match partner, awkward or developmentally inappropriate personal disclosures, and messages that convey viewing mentoring as a unidirectional, rather than a reciprocal, interaction.

Other screening recommendations to note include examining prospective mentors' public social media accounts to see how they communicate online and assess the likelihood of them sharing inappropriate exchanges with their mentee (**B.2.4 #5**). While one's social media presence is highly personal, and often not indicative of behavior in other in-person or virtual environments, these accounts do offer a

window into the lifestyles and online communication habits of prospective mentors, and as such may yield useful information for programs.

We have also recommended a special screening step with parents and guardians that is often overlooked: data use comfort. Even in school-based programs where parents or guardians have given permission for their child to generally participate in the program, e-mentoring providers may want to ask for special permission to collect and monitor data associated with their child's participation (**B.2.10 #10**). E-mentoring programs may often be

collecting or monitoring data about students that is beyond what is normal for the school or district, and extra permission may be required. For programs not set in schools, a parent or guardian should certainly be informed about and give consent for not only their child's participation, but the data collection and sharing inherent in the program. To see how one program conducts a comprehensive screening process, one that consistently uses the technology of the program throughout, see the snapshot about the screening practices of Sea Change Mentoring in the following E-Mentoring in Action snapshot.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION: USING PROGRAM TECHNOLOGY TO SCREEN MENTORS AND LEARN ABOUT PARTICIPANTS

Sea Change Mentoring keeps in mind that young people and adults in their program may be separated by oceans and continents and responsively operates as if pairs will likely not have the opportunity to meet in person. Knowing this, the program uses technology they expect pairs to communicate with from the very beginning of the intake process all the way through to match closure. Right from the beginning, all meetings are conducted using the video technology they expect mentors, mentees, and family members to use. This set expectation allows them to troubleshoot any technical issues early and creates consistency for the participants.

Sea Change uses technology resources to replicate the feel and experience pairs might have in an in-person program; they approach online engagement with participants as if each online realm is an in-person realm. For example, looking at a mentor's Facebook or Instagram page could be likened to bumping into the mentor at a social event. It gives us the opportunity to observe the choices they make to represent themselves, their additional interests, what other communities they may be a part of, as well as their ability to effectively communicate and healthily address conflicts online. Since meeting in person is likely not an option, a video interview is likened to an in-person interview. Program staff observe the environment from which they are calling, their attire, their social behavior, and how well they avoid other online distractions. Attention is paid to their comfort and ease with online technology. If the interview takes place in an office where the mentor is constantly interrupted by coworkers, program staff make a note to discuss other options for future call locations. When references (a friend, family member, or coworker) are interviewed, they are asked if they know the mentor online and/or in-person, how often they communicate with the mentor, and the last time they had a quality conversation. These questions help program staff



assess the significance of the relationship and if there are any concerns to be addressed. Getting a full sense of the mentor's "real life" and online presence has been significant in helping the program screen for quality mentors who are a good fit for the Sea Change Mentoring community.

Once the pair is matched, they are coached to think of ways where they use technology to support their relationship development. For example, one pair used a private Pinterest page to share images of what their respective communities look like. A mentor, who lived in Mexico, took photos of the science lab she worked in, the beach where she liked to spend time, the market where she bought her food. Her mentee, who lived in the Netherlands, took pictures of her bike route to school, her favorite park, and her family.

In another case, a pair experienced challenges with consistent conversations. The program explored other activities and interests where the mentee did not feel as shy. Gaming was discovered to be a place where the mentee communicated with ease. The mentor loved video games as well. After speaking with the parents about choosing an appropriate game, the pair played the game together — the mentor in Australia, the mentee in Europe, all the while they communicated as they played. The gaming activity helped to break the ice and ease communication when the pair was not gaming. The game provided an opportunity for the mentee to teach the mentor how to play the game better, which gave the mentee extra confidence to open up.

Screening around Participants' Commitment

The final recommendations around screening have to do with participants' formal commitment to the program and its rules of participation. The EEPM emphasizes that mentors and youth commit to meeting with the frequency, volume, and duration of participation required by the program (most often about once a week, for an hour or two per meeting, over the course of a school or calendar year). E-mentoring programs are well advised to get that same commitment from both mentors (**B.2.7 #6**) and youth and their parents/guardians (**2.12 #11**), although they will likely need to be more specific in their requirements.

If there was one strong theme in the research literature, it was that the frequency and quality of interactions made a major difference in terms of relationship quality and program satisfaction.

^{24,25,26,27,28,29} There was also a strong consensus that these relationships can wane a bit over time, either because one or more participants in the match has grown frustrated — with the technology, the interaction frequency and quality, or some combination of these factors — or because the natural momentum and enthusiasm at the start of the program has simply worn off. Thus, e-mentoring programs will want to be very specific about the expectations they have for participants in terms of frequency of communication. In some programs, that communication follows a set timeline and a curriculum-driven set of activities, making it easy to see when participants have missed sessions or not logged into the platform. But in many other programs, it is up to the mentor and mentee to initiate contact with one another, and in these instances, it can be very helpful to require minimal communication timing, such as at least once a week for the duration of the program. It is worth noting



that some e-mentoring programs do not have matches at all, meaning there is little expectation around how frequently one should be submitting or responding to messages. But even in these programs, frequency of engagement is still a key to benefitting from the program—it is hard to benefit from mentoring interactions if one is infrequently taking part in them.

It can also be helpful to set parameters around how quickly participants need to respond to messages from their mentee or mentor. While frequency of interactions is important, there were also several examples in the literature where participants (often mentors) were frustrated by a delay in response time from their match partner.^{30,31} E-mentoring programs may want to stipulate a set window of time that a message needs to be responded to, especially if mentoring pairs or groups are largely unsupervised. A long delay in response, even for benign reasons, can cause anxiety and feelings of mistrust for participants. If everyone is aware of the expectations around message response times, a lot of hard feelings can be avoided.

Making and Initiating Matches

As noted many times throughout this publication, e-mentoring programs come in all shapes and sizes, with a variety of formats and match structures. Some programs match mentors and youth in a traditional one-to-one dyad, while others employ group mentoring formats or self-selected affinity groups as a structure (for a good example of this, see the DO-IT program detailed in the work of Burgstahler³²) or offer no match structure at all.³³ But assuming that most programs will be connecting youth with a mentor in some formal way, there were several recommendations that stood out in the literature and in discussions with the Working Group.

The research on making matches in mentoring programs is rather mixed in terms of the criteria to consider. Some mentoring programs, such as those studied by Stoeger³⁴ and O’Neill,³⁵ purposefully connect youth in specific classes or with similar career interests to mentors from related disciplines or fields to provide project-specific support or encourage consideration of specific career paths. In these programs, the mentors theoretically bring very homogenous career skills and knowledge, and the mentees are all of similar ages with similar career interests and abilities. In these types of programs, the pools of mentors and students could be considered to be fairly uniform, meaning matching processes can be totally random or based on somewhat superficial factors such as hobbies or other interests outside of the career or project focus of the program.

But in other e-mentoring programs, there is as much a need to match carefully based on youth needs, mentor skills, and other factors as in face-to-face programs. In our review of the literature, we found programs that emphasized very specific matching criteria, such as pairing youth with disabilities with mentors who had the same or similar disabilities,³⁶ believed these mentors could share personal experiences and offer disability-specific empathy and problem-solving that other mentors might not. We also, however, found examples³⁷ of programs serving youth with very specific challenges using mentors who had not faced those challenges themselves, but who had special training in how to provide appropriate support.

Even common aspects of matchmaking, such as compatibility of gender, racial background, or lived experience, took on a slightly different spin in e-mentoring programs. One study in particular³⁸ noted the importance of “perceived similarity”

rather than actual real-life similarity based on demographic characteristics of the mentor and mentee. Because pairs were not meeting in person, many aspects of “similarity” were effectively muted, and it became less important how similar the individuals were in terms of gender, ethnicity, or personal background and more important that they had similar and compatible online communication styles and values. Matches with high “perceived” similarity reported higher levels of mentor support, as well as higher match satisfaction.³⁹

So what is an e-mentoring program to do when so many factors used in making matches in traditional programs may not have as much value in e-mentoring contexts? A few things did rise to the level of a formal recommendation. Programs should use the information and communication examples gathered during the application, screening, and training processes to note how participants

communicate electronically (e.g., do they display a sense of humor, use emojis or GIFs to add meaning and flair to their messages, do they seem comfortable sharing values and discussing personal issues, etc.). This can give programs a sense of each individual’s online communication style, allowing them to find mentors and youth who are “digitally compatible” and likely to be high in “perceived” similarity once in an e-mentoring relationship (**B.4.1 #1**). While not common in the literature, some programs also gave participants a choice of with whom they were matched after a trial period where they could get to know one another or view user profiles (for a great example of a program that puts mentees in control of their match, see the following E-Mentoring in Action snapshot about the iCouldBe program). Generally, programs are encouraged to match based on virtual personas as much as real-life similarities.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION: **EMPOWERING YOUTH TO CHOOSE THEIR MENTORS IN iCouldBe**

iCouldBe’s e-mentoring program provides students in under-resourced high schools with skills to build relationships that help them navigate high school and reach future goals. The program is embedded in classrooms led by trained teachers and implemented one class session per week during the school year. Mentees and mentors engage in weekly online activities that strengthen and expand real-life connections to help mentees develop self-knowledge, map academic and career paths, and identify tactical steps to achieve their goals. iCouldBe believes broad networks of support will open up new opportunities for academic and career success and increase income equality for mentees.

When mentees and mentors register on the iCouldBe platform, they create customized avatars and profiles. Mentees search for and select mentors based on their career interests. Mentees can review the profiles of mentors in their preferred career field and explore career and educational backgrounds, interests, hobbies, and personal biographies of all available mentors. Mentees invite the mentor of their choice to work with them throughout the program year. This approach continues to prove successful in garnering early program buy-in from mentees and ensuring mentees feel empowered by their selection and their leadership role in the mentoring relationship.



Getting Things Started on the Right Foot

There are a few recommended practices related to match initiation worth noting here:

- Programs need to determine who is responsible for making the initial contact between mentors and mentees (**B.4.3 #3**), assuming the program has a formal matching structure. At least one study⁴⁰ noted that the program put considerable effort into getting mentors to make initial contact with the mentee, and the quality of the opening message and response often set the tone for the remainder of the pair's interactions. It was crucial mentors set the stage with some personal information sharing, an informal tone, and open-ended yet direct questions (e.g., "What is your favorite part of school?" rather than "So, tell me about school."). Other programs, such as several in our Working Group, do a facilitated introduction where a program staff member introduces the pair and gets them conversing, even if just via email or text introductions. Critically, programs should have a formal process for making the initial contact and follow it with fidelity.
- If staff members are facilitating the initial communication, that is also an excellent time to address any formal commitments to the match as recommended under **B.2.7 #6** and **2.12 #11**. These match commitment agreements are often signed at the initial meeting in face-to-face mentoring programs, but because all of this may be happening virtually in an e-mentoring context, the program may have a digital version of these agreements that participants "e-sign" online or share via the technology platform (**B.4.4 #4**). This is also a good time to check with parents and guardians or partner site staff whether there are rules or barriers to the youth accessing the technology of the program, such as family rules

limiting "screen time" or times of the day at school where students do not have computer access (**E.4.6 #5**).

- It is also recommended programs provide mentors and youth with conversation starters, icebreakers, or other activities that can get the pair sharing information with each other in creative ways (building that "perceived" similarity) and learning each other's communication styles (hopefully building some "electronic chemistry" noted in the Introduction). The degree of prescribed activity here will be determined by how much information about mentors and mentees the program shares with participants before they "meet" for the first time. Some programs simply make the introduction and allow the mentor and youth to communicate based on the expectations set during training. Other programs are much more open about sharing important personal details, such as disability status or career interests, with mentors so that they are prepared to offer appropriate help right away and are not caught off guard by something their mentee or mentor reveals. It is up to each program to determine what information to share before matches meet. But in most programs, there is some initial set of talking points or activities matches should engage in to get the relationship off to a good start (**B.4.2 #2**). For one example of how programs can structure early interactions to set the stage for long-term success, see the snapshot about how iCouldBe handles those early conversations below.

Additional information about what makes for effective e-mentoring communication, including in the critical early stages of the match, are discussed in the next section addressing the need for training and skill building for program participants.



E-MENTORING IN ACTION:

GOOD RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION EARLY AT iCouldBe

iCouldBe is intentional about training mentors to see each mentee as an individual with unique life experiences, abilities, goals, strengths, and challenges, and encourages mentors to approach them with that mindset.

The iCouldBe curriculum starts with an initial “Meet Each Other” quest with activities that facilitate relationship development between mentors and mentees. Once mentees select their mentors, they start the initial conversation by sharing their interests, role models, milestones, past experience with mentoring, and desired program outcomes. The primary focus is on relationship-building so mentors can get to know their mentees as a person before they work on setting and achieving long-term goals. This is part of the trust-building process to allow the pair to feel comfortable with one another.

iCouldBe has built-in features to ensure mentors and mentees maintain frequent and consistent communication from the initial match through the end of the program year. Since iCouldBe leverages its proprietary platform to facilitate mentee and mentor communication, program staff take an omnipresent approach to managing — always present without being intrusive. Program managers can view and engage with mentoring pairs as they communicate but do not intervene unless necessary. This approach allows mentees and mentors the freedom to develop their relationship at a comfortable and mentee-driven pace.

As the relationship develops and the mentors learn more about their mentees, the mentees are more open to guidance and feedback. This affords mentors the opportunity to share their own professional and life experiences to support their mentees.



MAJOR THEME 3

Preparing Participants for Good Online Interactions

While it is true that any participant in any program will need training on how to maximize the mentoring experience, meet program expectations, and follow program rules, e-mentoring programs present some different needs when it comes to training participants. As one can imagine, the use of technology to facilitate mentor-mentee interactions changes things considerably. Participants are left without visual cues to guide the meaning and interpretation of their communication with one another. Technology issues can disrupt the flow of communication and frustrate even matches that are going quite well. And the remote, online nature of the relationships raises some different challenges related to youth safety, confidentiality, and approved activities. So while mentors and youth in these programs still need training in many of the basic relationship skills that in-person program participants receive, they also have some special needs in both training content and delivery that we will address here.

Content of Training for Participants

As with any youth mentoring program, the training topics for mentors, youth, and in some cases parents or guardians will largely be driven by the goals and activities of the program. We found examples in our literature search of programs that provided participants with frequent, even weekly, activities and a host of curriculum-driven or facilitator-provided discussion topics and learning opportunities.^{41,42,43,44} But we also found examples of programs where mentors and youth were largely

left to manage things on their own after some type of formal introduction. Obviously, mentors in these two scenarios will need different training, with one group needing instruction on key aspects of moving through the activities with the youth and the other group needing more coaching about how to build a strong relationship and offer support in the absence of set activities and talking points.

There are some training methods and topics that both the literature and our Working Group practitioners noted would be particularly helpful for any e-mentoring program.

- *Training participants on using the technology platform of the program* – While this may be most important for e-mentoring efforts that are providing their own homegrown communication platform that is unfamiliar to participants, all e-mentoring programs should consider training participants on appropriate use of the technology that mentors and youth will use to communicate, regardless of the popularity of the technology among the general public (**B.3.2 #2; E.3.4 #15; E.3.6 #21**). This may be true even for programs using participant's own hardware (e.g., cell phones) or software (e.g., Skype) to communicate. Rarely will all participants be experts in the platforms used by the program — there will always be new features, bugs, and tips for getting the most out of any combination of hardware and software. Users of proprietary platforms should be trained on how to log in, how to access different features on the platform, and how to manage their accounts. Training for all participants on the technical support offered by the program or partner site should also be offered, including hours and modes of tech support availability (**B.3.2 #6; E.3.4 #17; E.3.6 #23**).



- *Training participants on how to be an effective online communicator* – Mentors and youth will need plenty of guidance on how to communicate effectively. Research suggests mentors may need guidance around how to be youth- and relationship-oriented (rather than task-oriented); how to use emojis, GIFs, and memes to liven up mundane text communications; how to use strategic disclosures to build rapport and trust; how to convey complex emotions like empathy online (or at least not face-to-face); and how to ask clear questions that youth would feel comfortable answering.^{45,46,47} Mentors may also need training in how the developmental stage of their mentee influences their online communication (**E.3.2 #13**) and how to understand internet “slang” and other less formal communication styles that mentees might employ (e.g., the meaning of acronyms such as “LOL”). All of these topics will not only help the mentor understand their mentee, but they will also be helpful in allowing them to improve their own online “voice,” at least when it comes to relating to a young person (**B.3.2 #5**). In some programs, mentors may be tasked with helping the youth to network with others to build a web of support and may need training around how to help the mentee make other virtual connections that can support their goals (**B.3.2 #4**). Mentors will also need to know how to handle certain situations, such as verbal aggression or other “acting out” behaviors by the mentee, the sharing of intense emotions or major disclosures related to harmful experiences, and how to respond to ethical dilemmas or crisis situations.⁴⁸ (**B.3.3 #10**)

Youth, on the other hand, may need to work on skills such as increasing the length of their responses and not giving one-word answers, feeling comfortable sharing personal information or feelings, and how to maximize the advice and

instrumental support of a mentor (**E.3.4 #18**). Programs may also wish to provide youth with training on internet safety in general, especially if the program model encourages them to connect with other adults online (**E.3.4 new topic i**).

As noted in the previous section, both participants will need training on icebreakers and initial conversation starters so that the match can get off to a strong start, which seems to be especially critical in e-mentoring relationships (**B.3.2 #7 and #8; E.3.4 #19 and #20**). While there is always room to improve communication skills, programs may also want to provide ongoing training that can further build mentor and youth communication abilities, particularly if issues or misunderstandings arise (**E.3.2 #14**).

- *Expectations around communication frequency and commitment* – Given the importance of communication frequency in the success of e-mentoring relationships, it is likely impossible for programs to stress this enough in training, particularly the training provided to youth (**E.3.4 #16**). There were plenty of examples in the literature of mentors expressing frustration with the timing, frequency, and minimal content of mentee responses (e.g., the Digital Heroes campaign described by Rhodes). But mentors will also need these reminders, particularly in responding to messages that may have critical disclosures or sensitive personal information, where a delayed response could feel like a rejection to a vulnerable young person (**B.3.2 #3**).
- *Program rules related to safety, confidentiality, and approved activities* – Another overarching theme found in the literature was that strong e-mentoring relationships often evolve to a point of closeness where the mentor and mentee



desire some form of in-person communication. This concern is lessened in programs where mentors and youth are separated by great distances, but it is not uncommon for mentors and youth to feel dissatisfied with their electronic-only communication after a while. As noted in the introduction, some programs, such as iMentor, purposefully blend online and in-person interactions. Others simply allow for face-to-face meetings if parents and guardians approve. Others strictly forbid in-person interactions and actively scan shared messages to see if anyone is attempting “real world” contact. Thus, a key aspect of training is reiterating the rules around approved contact and whether any contact is allowed outside of the program platform (**B.3.3. #9**, which covers both mentor and youth training under **E.3.5**).

Programs will also want to reiterate any rules around whether mentors and youth can connect on social media that is outside of the platform provided by the program (**B.3.3 #12**).

Lastly, if mentors and youth will be accessing the platform of the program and communicating from hardware that is in public spaces (e.g., the school computer lab) or private spaces where the equipment is shared (e.g., the youth’s home), programs may want to reiterate the importance of logging off after each session, protecting passwords, and other tips that can keep the pair’s interactions confidential and keeps nonparticipants out of the platform (**B.3.3 #11**).

While it was rare to see parents deeply involved in e-mentoring programs or relationships in the literature, especially in comparison to face-to-face programs, any program that will be relying on parents to facilitate the youth’s access to the

technology should also offer parents some training on many of the topics noted above. This includes using the technology platform and the expectations around frequency and volume of communication (**E.3.6 #21-23**), who to contact with ethical or safety concerns (**E.3.6 #24**), and the risk management policies detailed under **B.3.3** and **E.3.5**, such as extra-program contact and social media policies.

The Delivery of Participant Training

The somewhat obvious challenge of training in an e-mentoring program is how to deliver it. Unlike an in-person program where mentors or youth can gather together in a physical location and everyone is ensured the same training experience, e-mentoring programs can be widely dispersed over large areas where participants simply cannot get together (or at least not easily). This situation makes compliance with some of the regular practices in the EEPM a challenge, necessitating a few recommendations here we thought would clarify quality training in e-mentoring contexts.

It is worth noting that most of the program examples we encountered in the research literature put considerable effort into training mentors and youth. In fact, in many cases, the programs seemed to offer access to more training content and information than would be expected in a typical in-person program. These programs were much more likely to have online, self-paced tutorial-type training content, online mentor and mentee handbooks and activity guides, and more frequent ongoing training provision than one might expect to find in a face-to-face program. To their credit, e-mentoring programs are taking advantage of their technology tools to ensure that mentors and youth receive a robust pre-match and ongoing training experience that can deliver the content noted above right when it is needed. We noted many examples in both the

literature and in our Working Group of programs offering Just-in-Time training when issues arose or when a critical activity needed reinforcement, as well as numerous examples of supplementary materials like mentor newsletters, special chat-based peer-learning opportunities for mentors, and real-time staff availability using the platform for handling delicate or crisis situations. Just because these programs might never gather trainers and participants in the same room to learn, in many ways they can provide a stronger overall training experience.

The recommendation for **Benchmark B.3.1 #1** addresses the delivery and duration of training for mentors. Most programs focus on the “two hours” of pre-match training required by this original benchmark; however, we found considerable variety in how, and for how long, mentors were trained in e-mentoring programs. That said, given the amount of content that most e-mentoring programs need to cover in training (use of the technology, communication styles, program rules, schedules, etc.) that two hour minimum should still be adhered to.

What Recommendation 1 really stresses, then, are some key aspects of training in e-mentoring programs:

- We suggest delivering the training via the same communication platform with which mentors and youth will engage (when possible). Obviously, not every program’s technology platform will allow for this kind of training function; but if possible, doing training in the same system will help users get familiar with the interface and might identify mentors or youth who are struggling to use the technology.
- When possible, staff should still be directly

interacting with participants during these trainings. Remember, pre-match training is an excellent time to keep looking for red flags that may disqualify someone from being a mentor. There is a temptation to make all training self-directed in these programs, especially if there is a robust technology platform in place that can offer online learning with a heavy multimedia component. But we encourage programs to stick with facilitator-led instruction as much as possible.

- While real-time, facilitator-led training may be the ideal, we also recognize that many e-mentoring programs offer at least part of their training in self-paced tutorials or online learning modules that participants access on their own and complete prior to matching. When this is the case, we encourage programs to design the training so that they have some ability to monitor not only completion, but the users’ engagement with the training content. When online training is well-designed, software can be programmed to require the learner to spend a certain minimum amount of time on each page or programmed so that mentors can’t skip sections. In addition, the back-end database can often be viewed by a mentoring program administrator to see how much time a prospective mentor spent on each page or spent on the whole course. See the discussion of new **Benchmark 3.5 E-MENTORING** below for additional considerations on how programs can maximize the fidelity to online training.
- Programs should think about what training topics should be delivered pre-match and which topics might be best covered after matches have communicated a few times and have a better sense of how the relationship is progressing. Some programs, especially those using written communication, use the first message mentors

or youth share to teach critical concepts during pre-interaction training. Using drafts of that first message, they emphasize communication skills, such as using a less formal tone, asking good questions, or strategically sharing personal information. This teaches participants what a good message looks like and gets the relationship off to a strong start once they hit “send.” Other programs may wait until the pair has been sharing messages for a while and use analysis of the content of those early messages to reinforce certain teaching points and improve the quality of messages over time. Programs may also wait until the matches have got past the “getting-to-know-you” stage to offer training on how to take the conversation to a deeper level. There is no right answer as to what content will be good for pre-versus post-match training, but keeping track of the issues that come up as matches communicate over time will eventually reveal the sticking points that may need to be addressed with ongoing training.

While we still encourage the two-hour pre-match training duration for e-mentoring programs, it is worth noting that our recommendation for programs serving youth with elevated risk or that involve complicated adult-youth projects may want to think about providing extra training (**E.3.1**). In the original EEPM, we recommend six or more hours for these programs. While that may not be feasible in an e-mentoring program, we do think mentors who are working with vulnerable youth need additional training beyond what other programs might offer. The potential for harm is perhaps higher here, as these youth are relying on messages from a remote person. As noted, many times in this publication, remote and text-based communication has the potential to be fraught with misunderstandings, unclear intentions, and other miscommunications.

So if your program is working with vulnerable youth, consider what might be a robust amount of training that will give mentors the skills they need to keep those young people safe.

In addition to the training delivery recommendations under **B.3.1**, we also developed one new Benchmark to address a training recommendation we did not see another spot for in the EEPM. New **Benchmark B.3.5 E-MENTORING** notes that programs should use learning checks, quizzes, remote role plays and scenarios, and other training strategies to ensure that trainees are absorbing the content and learning the important lessons the training is trying to impart. An expert trainer knows to build in learning checks and practice activities that apply knowledge when doing in-person training, and it can be easy to check and see if those being trained “get it.” But e-mentoring programs may not get that feedback easily from remote trainees unless they ask for it and build in training activities and learning checks that ensure the training content is understood. If the e-mentoring program does use a self-paced, online mentor training, then mentors still need some “face time” with staff. An online training strategy doesn’t absolve the program of the responsibility of providing time to interact with the mentor, even if it is just to allow the mentor to ask questions of staff.



MAJOR THEME 4

Ensuring Safe and Effective Participation Over Time

The fourth major theme of the supplemental practices for e-mentoring programs is ensuring participants have a safe and effective experience in the program over time. This theme encompasses all of the monitoring and support recommendations as well as training on ethical and safety issues (**B.3.2 #4; E.3.6 #23**) and topics related to risk management policies (**B.3.3 #8-11; E.3.7**).

Promoting Safe E-Mentoring Relationships

Protecting child safety is a top priority of e-mentoring programs, and the format of e-mentoring programs presents unique challenges and opportunities to promoting safe mentoring relationships. The *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*, 4th edition, considers practices that promote and protect both the physical as well as the psychological or emotional safety of mentoring program participants. As described above, there are specific recommended screening practices associated with protecting the physical safety of program participants (see Theme 2). In addition to these practices, the orientation and training for all individuals involved in the mentoring relationship should address the topics relevant to the program's population and model that promote a safe e-mentoring relationship (**B.3.2, B.3.3, E.3.5 and E.3.7**). If there any consequences of violating these program policies, such as dismissal from the program, those should also be communicated to and acknowledged by program participants prior to participating in the program. Compliance with these policies should also be actively monitored

throughout participation in the program and discussed as situations arise.

Some e-mentoring programs include an in-person component as part of their approved or required match activities, whereas others strictly prohibit program participants from meeting in person. There has been some suggestion in the literature that supplementing the electronic communication with face-to-face contact can be beneficial for e-mentoring relationships to help foster a closer relationship;⁵⁰ however, many factors inform the decision regarding whether program participants are allowed to meet in person. Two primary factors are the goals and objectives of the program and logistical factors such as geographic proximity or transportation considerations of program participants. For example, e-mentoring programs that emphasize project work to accomplish the desired goals of the program and place less emphasis on a close relationship between the mentor and mentee may determine that in-person contact is not necessary. Programs that pair mentors and mentees from geographically distant locations, such as programs matching youth with disabilities or rare diseases, are less likely to require or encourage in-person contact due to the significant logistical challenges. If the program does not allow in-person contact, it should have policies that explicitly state what is and is not allowed within the context of the program, even if it may seem obvious (**B.3.3 #9**). For example, if in-person contact is not allowed, programs should still have a statement regarding whether overnight visits or out of town travel with program participants are permitted.

In addition to establishing a policy and training about in-person contact among program participants, programs should have a policy regarding whether participants can communicate

at all outside of the approved communication platform used by the program. This may include social media interaction or phone calls, among many other potential forms of communication (**B.3.3 #12**). These types of communication may feel more comfortable to program participants if they are already familiar with communicating electronically and may serve to strengthen their relationship, as there is some evidence that e-mentoring program participants prefer multiple methods of connecting electronically to enhance their relationship.⁵¹ However, there may be important safety and programmatic considerations when determining if program participants can share communication or social media outside of the designated communication platform. Program participants may express frustration with the program rules regarding contact, and training should directly address any potential frustrations as well as the reasons why mentors and mentees must communicate using the approved methods. For example, mentors in one e-mentoring program for at-risk youth described frustration with using a secure email communication platform to communicate with their mentee, but they understood the necessity of the platform.⁵² When program participants understand the rationale for specific rules and policies within the program, they may be more compliant with the policies.

The forms of communication utilized by e-mentoring programs can present some unique ethical dilemmas that must also be considered by programs (**B.3.3 #10**). For example, mentors should receive training regarding the specific procedures for how to respond if their mentee discloses any information suggesting the mentee is intending to harm themselves or others. This may be particularly concerning if there is a significant delay between when the mentee writes or sends this disclosure to the mentor and when the mentor receives the

message.⁵³ Mentees may be more likely to disclose this information to a mentor in an e-mentoring program given the more impersonal nature of this type of communication and the emphasis on self-disclosure to promote closeness in the mentoring relationship. The lack of nonverbal cues or tone of voice can also make it difficult for mentors to know if the mentee is saying something in jest or if it is a serious threat. Furthermore, if the mentor and mentee have not established an emotionally close relationship, and the mentee discloses highly sensitive information, it may be more difficult for the mentor to deal with these sensitive issues. The policy (and accompanying procedures) should also clarify for program participants how the program will respond to these disclosures.

Another unique safety topic for e-mentoring program participants includes how to protect the confidentiality and anonymity of communications (**B.3.3 #11**). To promote trust, self-disclosure, and closeness in e-mentoring relationships, program participants need to feel secure and that their conversations are not shared with individuals outside of the program, except under specific circumstances such as a threat of harm to self or others. Thus, program participants should generally not share excerpts from conversations between program participants with friends, family, or colleagues,⁵⁴ although for certain programs serving young children, providing parents or guardians with access to the platform may ease their fears about online mentoring and might even deepen their helpful engagement with the program. In general, computers, websites, cell phones, and software programs that are utilized for participation in the e-mentoring program should have secure passwords that are required for access, and online platforms may include encryption technology for additional security.

As noted throughout this publication, one unique advantage of e-mentoring programs that utilize a closed platform for allowing mentors and mentees to communicate with one another is the ability to closely monitor the communications and interactions between program participants (**B.5.3 #3**). Many of these platforms automatically scan for forbidden content such as inappropriate words, images, or the exchange of phone numbers or email addresses and alert program staff if they identify this content in participant exchanges. Program staff may also have the ability to review communications between program participants and may do so periodically to check for any communications violating the program's policies and procedures. These practices can provide additional insight to program staff and provide an additional level of security for promoting safe e-mentoring relationships. However, this functionality does not take the place of rigorous screening and training for mentors and mentees, and mentees should receive additional training on internet safety rules (**E.3.4 topic i**) to help them be aware of any behavior that could be inappropriate or crossing a boundary and how to protect themselves when communicating online.

Promoting Effective E-Mentoring Relationships

Effective e-mentoring relationships are formed through high-quality interactions and conversations between mentors and mentees. Mentoring programs must monitor and assess the quality of these interactions to support the development of effective relationships (**B.5.4**). Monitoring of e-mentoring relationships may consist of reviewing the communications between participants on the program's platform but could also be accomplished through conversations with program participants or

a combination of both approaches. Regardless of how a program conducts monitoring, program staff should consider a common set of safety and quality characteristics of e-mentoring relationships and develop protocols for determining if relationships demonstrate these characteristics (**B.5.8 #3**).

The e-mentoring program should feel like a safe space for program participants to have open and honest conversations to build their relationship,^{55,56} and the research has identified several factors that can contribute to high-quality and more effective mentoring relationships. For example, communication between mentors and mentees should be frequent, primarily youth- or mentee-focused, and two-way such that both mentor and mentee are contributing to the relationship.⁵⁷ In addition, self-disclosure is a critical component of the development of any type of relationship and is particularly useful for the development of a close e-mentoring relationship.⁵⁸ However, for e-mentoring relationships that are primarily text-based (email, SMS, chat), there is a greater likelihood for misinterpretation or miscommunication such as a failure to identify a sarcastic comment from a serious comment,⁵⁹ especially when mentors and mentees do not know each other well. Program staff should monitor and assess whether there have been any misinterpretations or miscommunications in the relationship, how and whether they were resolved, and whether the program should provide any ongoing support to the relationship to address these challenges (**B.5.2 #1 & B.5.3 #2**).

Another frequently discussed factor influencing the quality of e-mentoring relationships is social presence, or the feeling of being in-person even when communicating remotely.^{60,61} When communicating using text-only methods, mentors and mentees can foster social presence through



the use of emoticons and other techniques like typing short encouraging comments (e.g., hmm, mmm, okay) that indicate to their partner they are paying attention. They can also encourage their partner to say more by describing their emotional reaction (e.g., LOL or laughing out loud) and/or nonverbal reactions to news and information written by their partner (e.g., “my heart started racing just reading about your experience”).^{62,63} This feeling of social presence may help to foster trust and self-disclosure within the relationship and may contribute to higher quality and more effective e-mentoring relationships.⁶⁴ Ongoing monitoring and support for e-mentoring should assess whether program participants are cultivating social presence and provide guidance for incorporating it into their relationship.

One of the most common findings from the research on e-mentoring relationships is the importance of the frequency of interactions between mentoring partners.^{65,66,67} Unfortunately, it is very common for mentoring program participants to not respond to communications from their partner in a timely manner.⁶⁸ Mentees may experience significant disappointment or even distress and anxiety if they do not receive a prompt response from their mentor^{69,70} or even worse, if their mentor stops responding to their communications without warning. However, when there are high levels of interaction between mentors and mentees, mentees are more likely to report feeling the relationship was beneficial and successful.^{71,72} With these implications in mind, e-mentoring program policies and training must minimize the risk for harm and promote safe, secure mentoring relationships by having clear and consistent policies regarding the frequency of communication and response time expectations.

In addition to questions about the frequency of

communications, e-mentoring programs must consistently check in with program participants to determine if they have experienced any technical issues with contacting their partners in the program. Technical problems can be a major barrier to the development of effective relationships (**B.5.2 #1 & B.5.3 #2**), and these problems should be addressed as quickly as possible to prevent these challenges from having an impact on the frequency of communications among program participants. Whenever possible, e-mentoring programs should have on-demand support available to help with any technical issues (**B.5.9 #4, B.5.10 #5**). On-demand support can also be valuable for supporting mentoring relationships in the moment when mentors and mentees need help with a task or support regarding how to respond to their partner.

Similarly, just-in-time or on-demand training that is immediately accessible to program participants when the need arises can address both technology issues as well as challenges related to the e-mentoring relationship. On-demand training could include topics specific to the goals and activities of the mentoring program or broader topics, such as how to communicate effectively in an e-mentoring relationship. On-demand support and just-in-time training can help to reduce any feelings of disconnection from the program that may be more common among participants in e-mentoring programs due to the lack of in-person contact or the asynchronous nature of the communication.

The content of mentor-mentee communications is another area where mentoring programs will want to clarify expectations and address challenges. While there are no universal guidelines regarding what activities mentors and mentees should engage in together within the context of an e-mentoring relationship, it is generally suggested that they



should complete task-based activities together that are provided by the program staff and in alignment with the program's goals and objectives⁷³ (**B.5.13**). Many of the existing mentoring programs described in the research and evaluated thus far are more instrumental than developmental in nature, such as an e-mentoring program for girls interested in STEM⁷⁴ and a mentoring program to support the development of older high school mentees' career aspirations.⁷⁵ Exactly how much structure and guidance the mentoring program should provide to support the interactions between program participants will depend on the goals and model of the program. At a minimum, programs should have conversation prompts and activity suggestions available for program participants to refer to as needed throughout their relationship when they need ideas for what to do or talk about. In addition, mentoring program staff can customize these resources for the various stages of the mentoring relationship and tailor them to the unique interests, goals, and challenges of a match.⁷⁶

Promoting safe and high-quality e-mentoring relationships requires some additional considerations and modifications of the practices outlined for traditional face-to-face mentoring relationships. However, there are some unique advantages of e-mentoring that programs leverage to create effective e-mentoring relationships.

Closure of E-Mentoring Relationships

Closure of e-mentoring programs should be planned and managed to prevent program participants from feeling abandoned by their partner. There is little guidance from the research literature on specific practices for the closure of e-mentoring relationships; thus, the recommended practices for e-mentoring programs are informed by the Working Group and provide an extension of the

practices for in-person mentoring relationships.⁷⁷ When mentoring relationships end abruptly or with uncertainty, this can leave participants feeling as if they did something wrong and can undermine the impact of the program.^{78,79} As the e-mentoring relationship comes to an end, which may be due to a planned ending of the program or because one member of the relationship is no longer able to participate, staff should facilitate a series of final communications between program participants (**B.6.1 #2**). These communications should provide an opportunity for members to reflect on the relationship and thank their partner, as appropriate. The final e-mentoring activities may also include an online or virtual celebration event (**E.5.2 #6**). For example, the program may coordinate program participants creating a souvenir of their relationship like a web album or presentation,⁸⁰ or the program could send program participants a small gift or virtual card that they open simultaneously. Part of the business of ending e-mentoring relationships should also include a discussion with all program participants about the policies for any future interactions, both in-person and online, such as through personal social media accounts (**B.6.7 #4**). These policies should allow each participant in the relationship to express their personal preferences regarding future contact since some individuals may not want to have ongoing contact after their involvement in the program has formally ended.

For e-mentoring programs that collaborate with partner organizations for the implementation of the program, such as schools or business, it is important to coordinate the closure of e-mentoring relationships with the timeline and deadlines of these organizations to increase the likelihood of participation (**B.6.1 #1**). For example, end-of-year testing or activities within schools is often associated with changes in the regular classroom

schedule, which can vary by school. Programs implemented within a school or classroom must be aware of these changes and how they could impact closure activities.

Finally, it is recommended that e-mentoring programs conduct an exit interview or survey with all program participants when their participation in the e-mentoring program is coming to an end. The exit interview should solicit feedback about topics such as participants' perceptions of the support provided by program staff, challenges encountered during the online interactions, the benefits they

perceived as a result of e-mentoring, and ideas for ways to improve the program. E-mentoring programs may prefer to conduct the exit interview through an online survey if program participants are more familiar with completing program activities online and depending on the size of the program.

For a great example of how one e-mentoring program encourages reflection at the end of the match through structured activities, see the snapshot about how closure is handled in the programs offered by Cricket Media.

E-MENTORING IN ACTION:

PERSONAL REFLECTION AS A KEY COMPONENT OF CLOSURE IN THE CRICKET MEDIA PROGRAMS

Cricket Media® (CM), www.cricketmedia.com, has two e-mentoring programs: Cricket Together (CT), which focuses on interdisciplinary literacy, and TryEngineering Together (TET), which focuses on STEM (developed in partnership with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers). These programs help students in third through fifth grades in underserved communities achieve their academic and personal potential. Both programs, delivered through a safe, digital platform, encourage students and e-mentors to develop online learning friendships through exchanging emails about collaboratively read articles and various life updates while under the continuing guidance of classroom teachers.

CM has found providing structured learning experiences, created with purpose and clear expectations, is an essential component for thriving e-mentoring relationships. Knowing personal relationships fuel learning relationships, Cricket Media programs provide each student with their own e-mentor who commits to a full academic year of correspondence, giving adequate time to develop a meaningful relationship through written correspondence. Cricket Media programs emphasize the establishing, building, and closing aspects of participant relationships. The programs begin and end with the academic year and are divided into three parts: Introduction/Getting to Know You, Curriculum Units, and Reflection/Saying Goodbye. Training (and ongoing messaging) for teachers and e-mentors stress the importance of gracefully establishing and ending the e-mentor/student relationships.

Since the end of the school year is the stated endpoint of the programs, expectations for a continuing relationship beyond the school year are kept in check. The Reflection/Saying Goodbye unit, which begins one month before the end of the school year, completes the program experience with a “final letter”



exchange. E-mentors are reminded by their teachers, through the platform and email notifications, as to when their initial letters are due and how important they are to students' experience. Teachers use the Reflection/Saying Goodbye unit as an opportunity for class reflection and analysis of the learning experience. Email notifications and additional resources on the platform share guidance about how to prepare for and write a compelling "goodbye" letter. E-mentors have told CM one of the resources that has been most useful for writing caring, reflective letters includes a retrospective review method, which involves reviewing the previous letter exchanges and rereading the articles. Writing prompts, graphic organizers, and suggested "encouraging" statements are also helpful resources of letter writing support. E-mentors encourage their students to maintain an openness to possibilities for learning while sharing ways they have learned from the students.

E-mentors' letters model for students how to say goodbye and express appreciation for the shared learning relationship. E-mentors are asked to share specific moments and exchanges that captivated them throughout the program to support their comments and model what it means to share evidence of opinions and assertions.

CM's e-mentoring coordinator plays an important role in bringing the programs to a successful close by helping keep teachers and e-mentors on schedule with timely reminders and check-ins. CM encourages ongoing additional reflection by continually requesting feedback from its e-mentors, students, and teachers via surveys, emails, and on the platform. The e-mentors and teachers complete three surveys during the course of the year: the pre-program survey, a mid-year survey and a post-program analysis. This formal process for reflection helps CM continue to improve the programs to better serve students, e-mentors, and teachers.



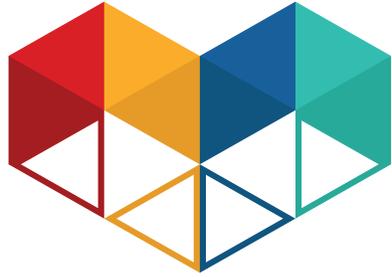
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