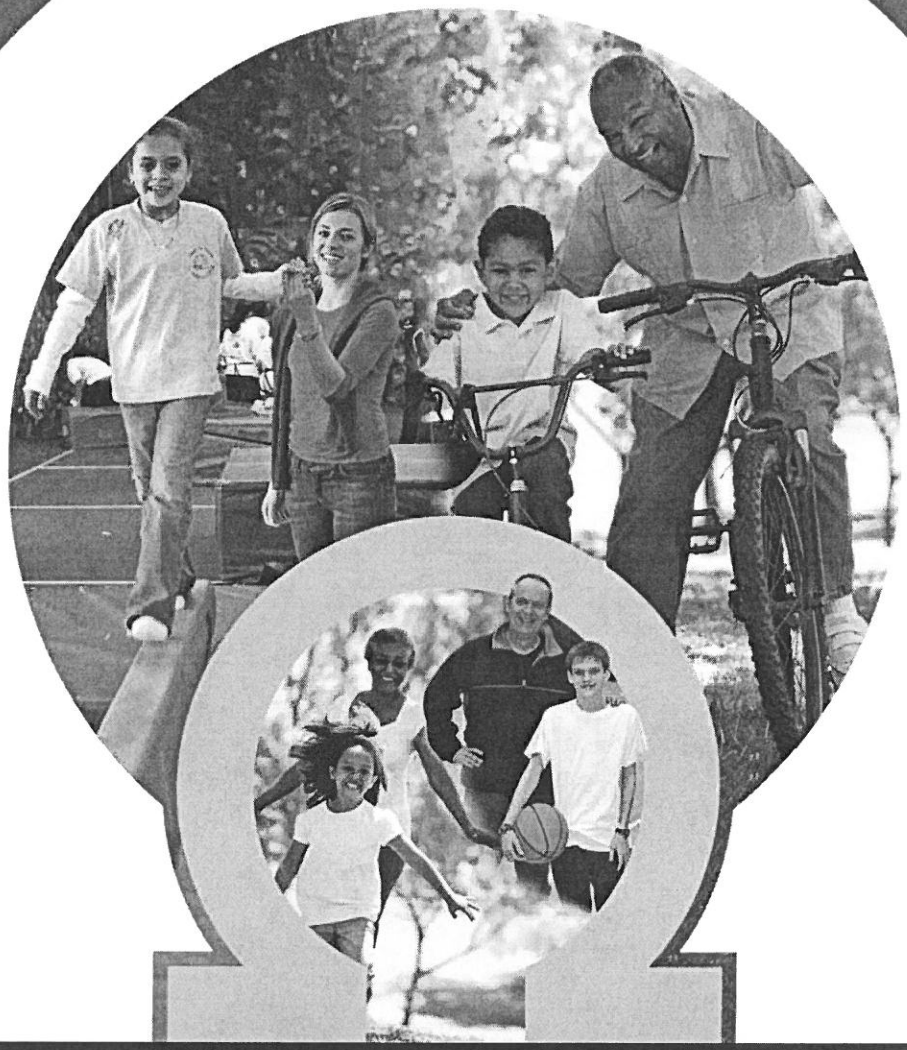
3rd Edition

Elements *of* Effective Practice for Mentoring™

Newly revised edition, which includes evidenced-based operational standards



MENTOR.

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Introduction

As a strategy for helping young people succeed in school, work and life, mentoring works. It helps give young people the confidence, resources and support they need to achieve their potential. But, the fact is this: these positive outcomes are only possible when young people are engaged in high-quality mentoring relationships.

The *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring* holds the key to success in producing high-quality relationships. The new edition of the *Elements* provides six evidence-based standards for practice that incorporate the latest research and best-available practice wisdom. It also reprises advice that appeared in earlier editions on program design and planning; program management; program operations; and program evaluation.

We believe adherence to the *Elements* will ensure that mentoring relationships thrive and endure. They include measures that any mentoring program in any setting can implement, as well as measures that any agency can incorporate within the mentoring element of broad-based, positive youth development programming. This means that community-based, corporate-based, school-based, faith-based and Internet-based mentoring programs can use the *Elements* to meet the specific needs of the young people they serve and the milieu in which they operate. And, it means that afterschool and other positive youth development programs which embed mentoring within their programming will find the *Elements* equally useful and adaptable.

These new guidelines are the culmination of a process that, once again, brought together the nation's foremost authorities on mentoring. The leaders are recognized in the Acknowledgments section. We thank each and every one of them for their invaluable counsel and dedication to making mentoring the kind of experience it should be for children.

For additional details about the research that underpins these guidelines or to learn more about approaches to implementing them, please visit www.mentoring.org. Finally, there will undoubtedly be a fourth edition of the *Elements*, so your feedback and suggestions are welcome. Meanwhile, we thank you for your interest and for continuing to help raise the bar as we all work to expand the world of quality mentoring.

In partnership,

Tonya T. Wiley
Chief Administrative Officer

This edition of the *Elements* is divided into two parts:

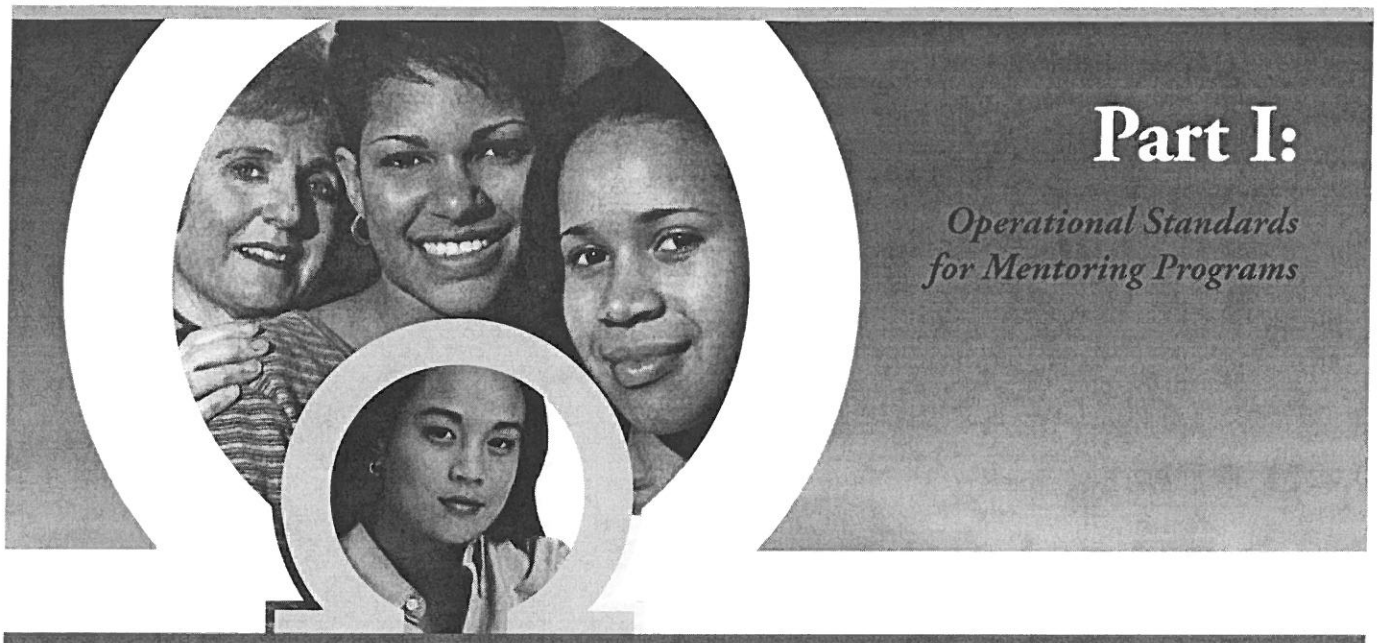
Part I: Operational Standards for Mentoring Programs *(or mentoring embedded into larger, positive youth development programming, like afterschool programs)*

Part II: Program Design and Planning, Management and Evaluation

Part I offers six evidence-based **standards** that address six critical dimensions of mentoring program operations: 1) recruitment; 2) screening; 3) training; 4) matching; 5) monitoring and support; and 6) closure. For each standard, specific **benchmarks** are advanced, along with research-based **justifications**. Together, the standards and benchmarks provide practical guidance on how best to approach the provision of high-quality mentoring in day-to-day operations — whether in a stand-alone mentoring program or a positive youth development program in which mentoring is one element. In addition, **enhancements**, based principally on the wisdom of outstanding practitioners, are offered for readers' consideration and use.

Part II provides equally practical advice regarding how to build a new mentoring program or strengthen an existing one. It focuses on program design and planning; program management; and program evaluation. The **program design and planning** section includes guidelines you can use to launch an effective new mentoring initiative. The section on **program management** focuses on what needs to be done to ensure that a mentoring program operates within a strong organizational context, no matter what the precise setting — which will continue to vary widely. The section on **program evaluation** imparts basic guidelines on how to prepare for and support this important function.

Finally, to review and adapt the operational standards and/or make use of advice regarding program planning, management, operations and evaluation, please check out two additional resources. First, meet with your local *Mentoring Partnership* (They now operate in 25 states and are one-stop sites for information about quality mentoring practice. See www.mentoring.org/find_resources/state_partnerships/ for listings.). Second, please visit www.mentoring.org, the nation's most comprehensive resource for mentors and mentoring initiatives nationwide.



Part I:

Operational Standards for Mentoring Programs

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, practices and challenges of mentoring in the program.

Mentee Recruitment

B.1.2 Program recruits youth whose needs best match the services offered by the program and helps them understand what mentoring is and what they can expect from a mentoring relationship.

Enhancements:

Mentor Recruitment

E.1.1 Program has a written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentors in its program.

Mentee Recruitment

E.1.2 Program has a written statement outlining eligibility requirements for mentees in its program.

Justification for Recruitment Benchmarks:

Mentors' unfulfilled expectations can contribute to an earlier-than-expected ending of mentoring relationships.[1] Thus, it is important for programs to realistically describe both the rewards and challenges of mentoring when recruiting mentors. When imagined outcomes are not immediately realized or take a different form than what was originally expected, mentors may decide that the relationship does not meet their needs, and, consequently, they may end the match prematurely. Thus, when recruiting potential mentors, it is important to set realistic expectations regarding a mentoring relationship and what it can achieve. Practically speaking, one way to set realistic expectations for a prospective mentor is to provide him or her with written eligibility requirements.

Also, mentees frequently report not knowing what to expect from a mentoring program and/or in a mentoring relationship.[1] Therefore, when mentees are recruited for participation in a mentoring program, it is important to provide them with information about what mentoring is and how it can be helpful to them. Program staff should also inquire about prospective mentees' expectations about being mentored and about the mentoring program. In this way, program staff can help prospective mentees develop both positive and realistic expectations.

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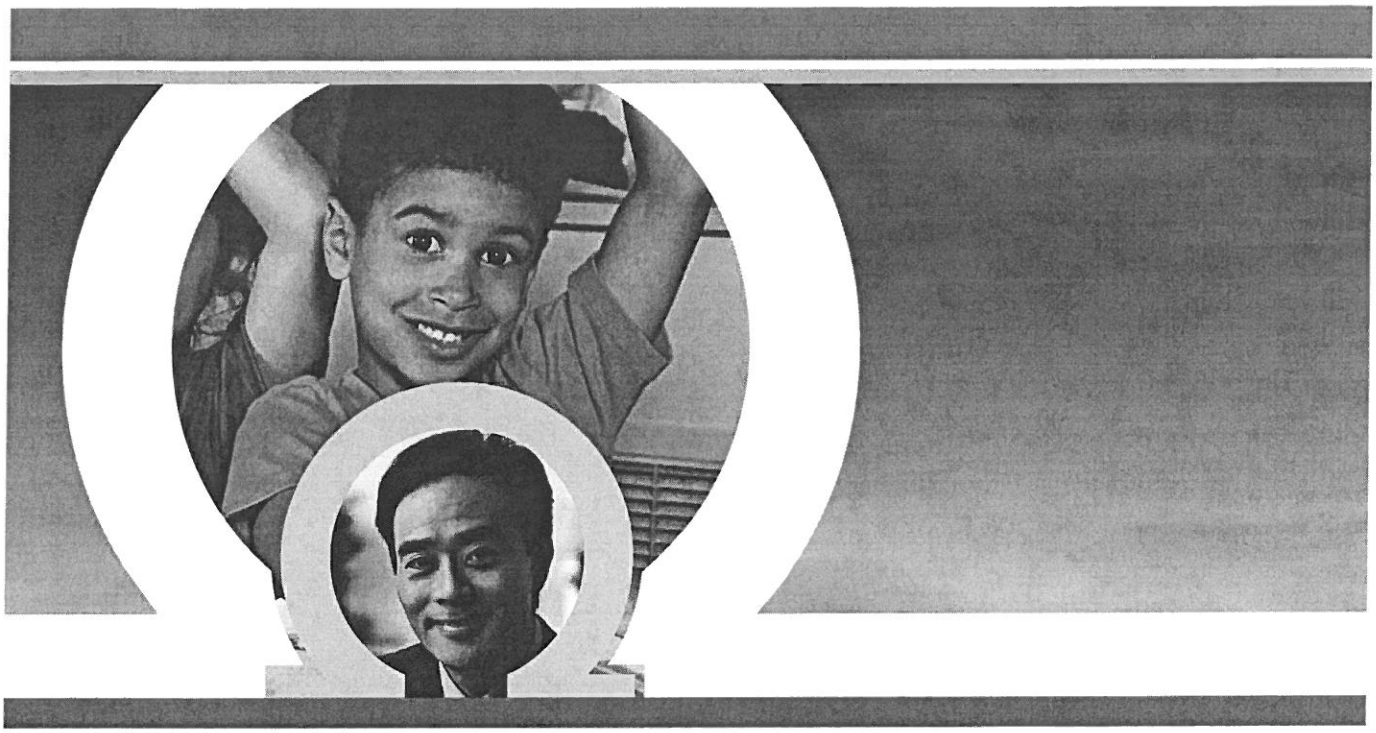

Standard 2: Screening

Standard: Screen prospective mentors to determine whether they have the time, commitment and personal qualities to be an effective mentor.

Benchmarks:

Mentor Screening

B.2.1 Mentor completes an application.

B.2.2 Mentor agrees to a one (calendar or school) year minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship.

B.2.3 Mentor agrees to participate in face-to-face meetings with his or her mentee that average one time per week and one hour per meeting over the course of a calendar or school year.*

*This benchmark may be addressed differently as long as there is evidence to support that the variation is associated with positive outcomes for mentees (e.g., combining in-person meetings with online communication or telephone calls; meeting almost exclusively online; meeting less frequently than once a week, with each meeting lasting for more than an hour, on average). As a general rule, programs should aim to either meet this benchmark or provide a clear rationale for doing otherwise. (See justification for additional comments on this topic.)

B.2.4 Program conducts at least one face-to-face interview with mentor.

B.2.5 Program conducts a reference check (personal and/or professional) on mentor.

B.2.6 Program conducts a comprehensive criminal background check on adult mentor, including searching a national criminal records database along with sex offender and child abuse registries.

Mentee Screening

B.2.7 Parent(s)/guardian(s) complete an application and provide informed consent for their child to participate.

B.2.8 Parent(s)/guardian(s) and mentee agree to a one (calendar or school) year minimum commitment for the mentoring relationship.

B.2.9 Parents(s)/guardian(s) and mentee agree that the mentee will participate in face-to-face meetings with his or her mentor a minimum of one time per week, on average, for a minimum of one hour per meeting, on average.

Enhancements:

E.2.1 Program utilizes national, fingerprint-based FBI criminal background checks (e.g., the SafetyNET system operating under the auspices of the Child Protection Improvements Act, in cooperation with the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children).

E.2.2 School-based programs assess mentor's interest in maintaining contact with mentee during the summer months following the close of the school year and offer assistance with maintaining contact.

Justification for Screening Benchmarks:

Screening practices, including face-to-face interviews with prospective mentors, as well as reference and background checks, are recommended as a guideline across a wide range of mentoring programs.[1,2] Reference checks are also essential for assessing the suitability of the prospective mentor for a mentoring relationship. More specifically, criminal background checks are a necessary component of screening prospective mentors and must be conducted before initiating any contact between the mentor and the mentee. The check provides a concrete method for mentoring programs to enhance the likelihood that the mentee will be protected and safe with his or her mentor.

Analyses indicate that it is important to gain access to records from national and not just state registries because criminals move, and one state registry alone may not provide a complete picture of an individual's criminal history. The SafetyNET criminal background check system employs a fingerprint-based system that relies on nationwide records available through the FBI. Findings indicate that SafetyNET provides the best available protection against those who may have a record of serious crimes against children in one state and then apply to be a mentor in another state.[3]

Mentor and Mentee Commitment

Longer-term mentoring relationships are associated with more benefits to youth than shorter-term relationships. Evidence for the importance of relationship duration has emerged from studies of community- and school-based models of volunteer youth mentoring.[4,5,6,7,8] For example, adolescents who participated in a relationship that lasted at least 12 months had more positive benefits as compared to youth in relationships that lasted fewer than 12 months.[4] In addition, prematurely ending a match may result in negative child outcomes.[4,9] Taken together, these studies establish the importance of mentoring relationships lasting for at least one

academic or calendar year. What may eventually emerge as the dominant influence on effects related to program duration is whether relationships are continued for the full duration of the established expectations, even if these are for a shorter period of time than one calendar year.[10] However, the current evidence suggests that longer is better and that programs that last less than one year generally produce less potent outcomes.

In addition to relationship length, the frequency of contact between mentor and mentee has also been linked to positive youth outcomes. Frequent, regular contact provides more opportunities to develop a close relationship by engaging in shared activities and providing ongoing social and emotional support.[7,11,12]

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Standard 3: Training

Standard: Train prospective mentors in the basic knowledge and skills needed to build an effective mentoring relationship.

Benchmarks:

Mentor Training

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

B.3.2 Mentor training includes the following topics, at a minimum:

a. Program rules;
b. Mentors' goals and expectations for the mentor/mentee relationship;
c. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles;
d. Relationship development and maintenance;
e. Ethical issues that may arise related to the mentoring relationship;
f. Effective closure of the mentoring relationship; and
g. Sources of assistance available to support mentors.

Enhancements:

Mentor Training

E.3.1 Program uses evidence-based training materials.

E.3.2 Program provides additional pre-match training opportunities beyond the two-hour, in-person minimum.

E.3.3 Program addresses the following developmental topics in the training:
a. Youth development process;
b. Cultural, gender and economic issues; and
c. Opportunities and challenges associated with mentoring specific populations of children (e.g., children of prisoners, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, youth in foster care, high school dropouts), if relevant.

E.3.4 Program uses training to continue to screen mentors for suitability and develops techniques for early trouble-shooting should problems be identified.

Mentee Training

E.3.5 Program provides training for the mentee and his or her parent(s)/guardian(s) (when appropriate) on the following topics:
a. Program guidelines;
b. Mentors' obligations and appropriate roles;
c. Mentees' obligations and appropriate roles; and
d. Parental/guardian involvement guidelines.

Justification for Training Benchmarks:

Mentor Training

Mentor training is a vital component of any successful mentoring program.[1] Mentor training is particularly important because it has documented implications for mentors' perceptions about the mentor-mentee relationship, including their feelings of closeness, support, satisfaction and effectiveness as a mentor.[2,3,4] Further, these perceptions of the mentor-mentee relationship are thought to influence the positive outcomes and continuation of the mentor-mentee relationship, suggesting the lasting importance of mentor training for youth outcomes.[4]

Length of Mentor Training

According to recent research, community- and school-based mentors in Big Brothers Big Sisters of America programs who attended fewer than two hours of pre-match training reported less positive feelings of closeness and support about the relationship with their mentee, spent less time with their mentee and were less likely to continue their relationship into a second year than mentors who received more training.[3]

Content of Mentor Training

Mentors and mentees may experience difficulties when their motivations and goals for the mentoring relationship do not match. Mentors' motivations are especially influential in the early stages of the mentoring relationship.[5,6] Mentors' motivations also influence whether they obtain information about mentoring prior to the match, plan for future activities with their mentee and form expectations about the mentoring relationship.[7] And, mentors who report a discrepancy between their initial expectations of their relationship with their mentee and their actual post-match experiences with their mentee are less likely to report an intention to stay in the mentoring relationship.[8,9] Consequently, training should include a focus on mentor motivations, as well as on helping mentors to identify their goals, modify unrealistic expectations and plan to compare their goals with their mentees' goals to identify and address discrepancies between the two.

Given that having realistic expectations is associated with relationship longevity, training should address the needs of special populations of mentored youth, such as the children of prisoners, children in foster care, children in the juvenile justice system,

children who have dropped out of school and immigrant children.[8,9] For example, immigrant youth face unique challenges, including stress related to discrimination, poverty and separation from family members.[10] Training for mentors of immigrant youth should raise volunteers' awareness of these challenges, as well as heighten their cultural sensitivity. In addition, training should stress the negative outcomes associated with early termination, as research suggests that the termination of a mentoring relationship may be particularly destructive for immigrant youth, especially if they have already experienced the loss of family members during the process of migration.[11]

In another example of a special population, children of incarcerated parents struggle with issues of trust and social stigma.[12] These children often believe that no one trusts them because of their parents' criminal history and have trust issues themselves due to their unstable family situation.[12] Training for mentors of this population should emphasize building trust, for example, by being consistent and following through with plans. Mentors of children of prisoners should also be aware of the possibility that their mentees may feel embarrassed about their parent's incarceration, and they should be equipped with the skills necessary to respond effectively in the event that these feelings are disclosed.[12]

Finally, long-term positive mentoring relationships develop through demonstrating positive relationship behaviors such as authenticity, empathy, collaboration and companionship.[9] Training should also focus on developing and sustaining these relationship-enhancing behaviors. Further, training on how to foster a developmental (i.e., cooperative, mentor-driven relationship designed to meet the needs of the mentee) versus prescriptive (i.e., mentor as authority figure) mentoring relationship is recommended.[13]

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Standard 4: Matching

Standard: Match mentors and mentees along dimensions likely to increase the odds that mentoring relationships will endure.

Benchmarks:

B.4.1 Program considers its aims, as well as the characteristics of the mentor and mentee (e.g., interests, proximity, availability, age, gender, race, ethnicity, personality and expressed preferences of mentor and mentee) when making matches.

B.4.2 Program arranges and documents an initial meeting between the mentor and mentee.

Enhancements:

E.4.1 Program staff member should be on site and/or present during the initial meeting of the mentor and mentee.

Justification for Matching Benchmarks:

Matching mentors and mentees based on similarities such as age, gender, race and ethnicity, as well as mutual interests, is frequently recommended. However, research comparing cross-race and same-race matches has found few, if any, differences in the development of relationship quality or in positive outcomes — suggesting that matching on race may not be a critical dimension of a successful mentoring relationship.[1,2] Thus, although the research is not yet conclusive, it has been suggested that matching based on qualities such as the mentor's skills and common interests with the youth should take precedence over matching based on race.[3]

In addition, it has been suggested that a mentor's interpersonal skills be considered during the matching process.[4] For example, one specific interpersonal skill that has been studied in recent research, known as attunement, is defined as a mentor's ability to identify and solve relationship barriers. Research has found that the strongest mentor-mentee relationships are with mentors who were either highly or moderately attuned, which suggests that a mentor's ability to tune in to others should be considered in making a match.

Once matched, mentoring best practices suggest that mentors and mentees should have a formal, initial meeting documented by the mentoring program.[5]

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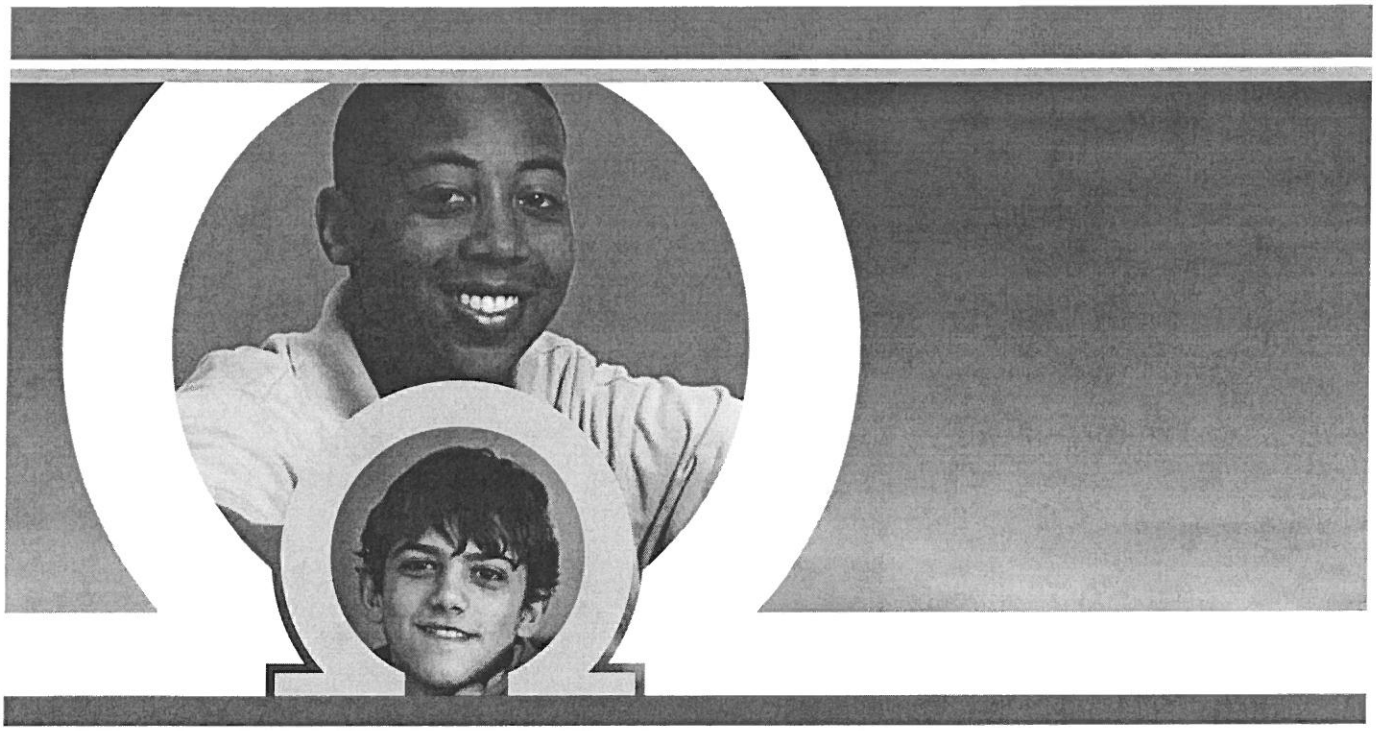

Standard 5: Monitoring and Support

Standard: Monitor mentoring relationship milestones and support mentors with ongoing advice, problem-solving support and training opportunities for the duration of the relationship.

Benchmarks:

B.5.1 Program contacts the mentor and mentee at a minimum frequency of twice per month for the first month of the match and monthly thereafter.

B.5.2 Program documents information about each mentor-mentee contact, including, at minimum, date, length and nature of contact.

B.5.3 Program provides mentors with access to at least two types of resources (e.g., expert advice from program staff or others; publications; Web-based resources; experienced mentors; available social service referrals) to help mentors negotiate challenges in the mentoring relationships as they arise.

B.5.4 Program follows evidenced-based protocol to elicit more in-depth assessment from the mentor and mentee about the relationship and uses scientifically-tested relationship assessment tools.

B.5.5 Program provides one or more opportunities per year for post-match mentor training.

Enhancements:

E.5.1 Program has quarterly contact with a key person in the mentee's life (e.g., parent, guardian or teacher) for the duration of the match.

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

E.5.3 Program thanks mentors and recognizes their contributions at some point during each year of the relationship, prior to match closure.

Justification for Monitoring and Support Benchmarks:

Practices Designed to Provide Monitoring and Support

Matches that are monitored and supported are more satisfying and successful, which, in turn, leads to more positive youth outcomes.[1,2,3,4] Continued monitoring of the relationship should especially focus on the development of close relationships, as youth who perceive more trusting, mutual and empathic relations with their mentors experience greater improvements than youth who perceive lower levels of these relationship qualities.[5] Mentoring programs that provide monthly calendars of low-cost events, offer tickets to events or provide opportunities to participate in structured activities are associated with positive outcomes.[6]

Assessment of Mentor/Mentee Relationship

Assessing the quality of each mentoring relationship from the perspective of both the mentor and mentee can yield valuable information for supporting individual matches.[7,8] Many surveys have been developed for this purpose, but only a small number are evidence-based and have been rigorously evaluated for reliability and validity.[7] Programs could benefit by seeking out and using scientifically-validated surveys when assessing mentoring relationship qualities.

Advanced Mentor Training for Ongoing Support

After the mentor and youth have begun their relationship, mentors can benefit from additional training on topics such as increasing multicultural understanding, particularly regarding issues of race and class differences.[9] This type of training would provide mentors with the opportunity to identify and discuss possible cultural differences they and their mentee may encounter, which could help to prevent potential misunderstandings in the future.

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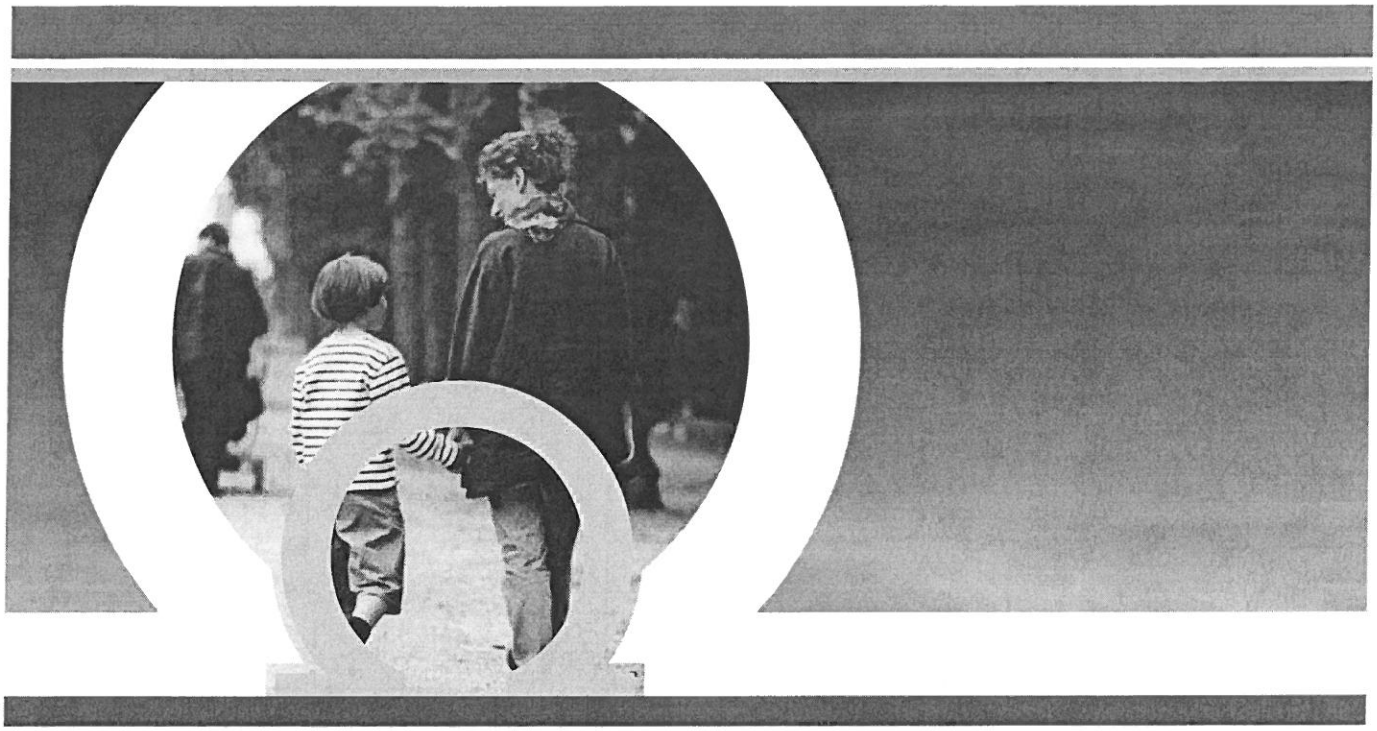

Standard 6: Closure

Standard: Facilitate bringing the match to closure in a way that affirms the contributions of both the mentor and the mentee and offers both individuals the opportunity to assess the experience.

Benchmarks:

B.6.1 Program has procedure to manage anticipated closures, including a system for a mentor or mentee rematch.

B.6.2 Program has procedure to manage unanticipated match closures, including a system for a mentor or mentee rematch.

B.6.3 Program conducts and documents an exit interview with mentor and mentee.

Enhancements:

E.6.1 Program explores opportunity to continue the mentor/mentee match for a second (or subsequent) year.

E.6.2 Program has a written statement outlining terms of match closure and policies for mentor/mentee contact after a match ends.

E.6.3 Program hosts a final celebration meeting or event with the mentor and mentee to mark progress and transition.

Justification for Closure Benchmarks:

Prevention of Premature Closure

Research findings suggest that matches that end prematurely can result in negative outcomes for mentees such as increases in problem behaviors.[1] Thus, standards regarding closure are designed to prevent potentially avoidable, premature closures.

Reasons for Closure

Mentoring relationships can end for a wide range of reasons that are both predictable (e.g., conclusion of academic year program) and unpredictable (e.g., moving, illness). Also, closure may occur as a result of interpersonal or practical challenges that result in the mentor losing interest or motivation to sustain the mentoring relationship (e.g., mentee having no phone, failure of the mentee to attend scheduled meetings, failure to discuss personal issues).[1]

Closure Procedures

Regardless of why the mentoring relationship is ending, programs should always assist the mentor in trying to end the relationship on a positive note for everyone involved.[2] Program staff should provide pre- and post-match training to prepare mentors and mentees for anticipating the end of the relationship, as well as for how to end the mentoring relationship in a positive way.[3] Mentors and mentees should discuss memories of fun times they have had together and participate in a special activity for their last meeting.[4] A best practice guideline is to hold a graduation night, which allows mentees to have a sense of closure with both the mentor and the program.[2] Also, recognition of the specific contributions of mentors and mentees is recommended.[5]

An exit interview with the mentor and mentee can help the program determine whether there are any additional resources or supports that the program could provide that would allow the match to continue. Interviewing the mentor and mentee at the end of the relationship allows them to reflect on the positive experiences they shared and the impact that they had on each other. It also provides the mentoring program with an opportunity to assess how well it adhered to its own standards.

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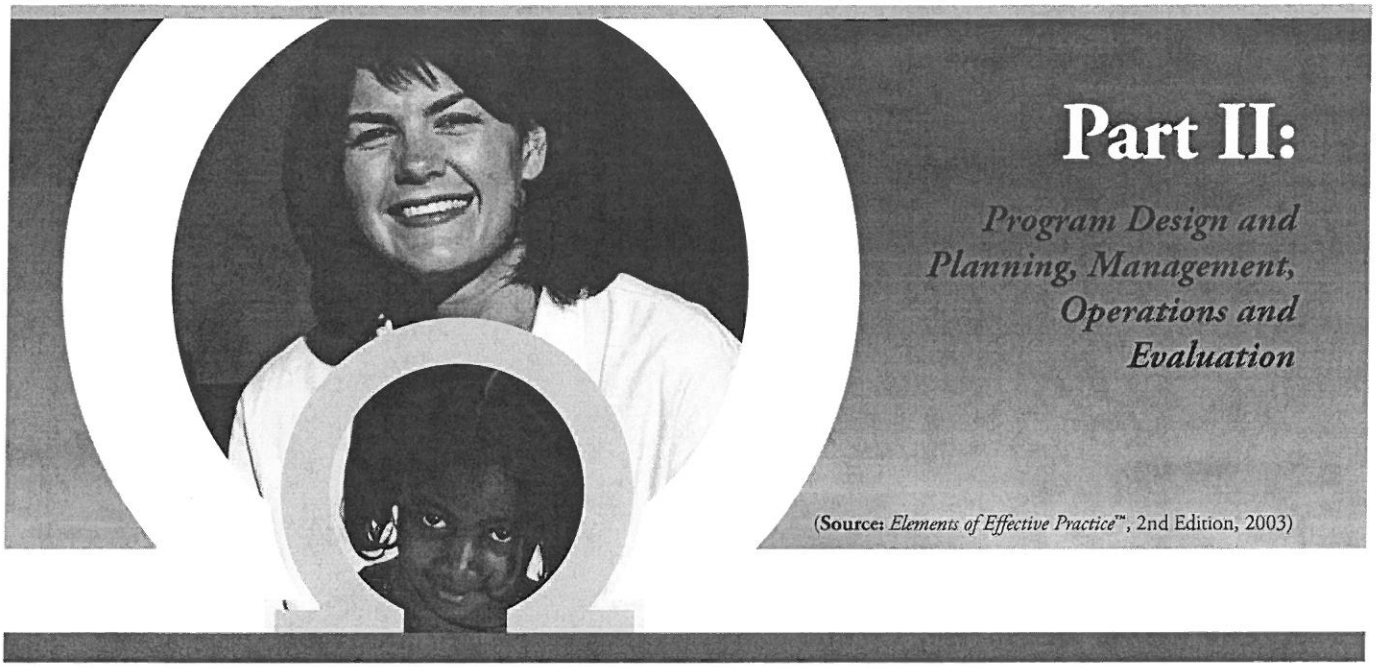


Part II:

Program Design and Planning, Management, Operations and Evaluation

(**Source:** *Elements of Effective Practice™*, 2nd Edition, 2003)

Program Design and Planning

Design the parameters for the program:

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

- Decide how to evaluate program success; and
- Establish case management protocol to assure that the program has regular contact with both mentors and mentees concerning their relationship.

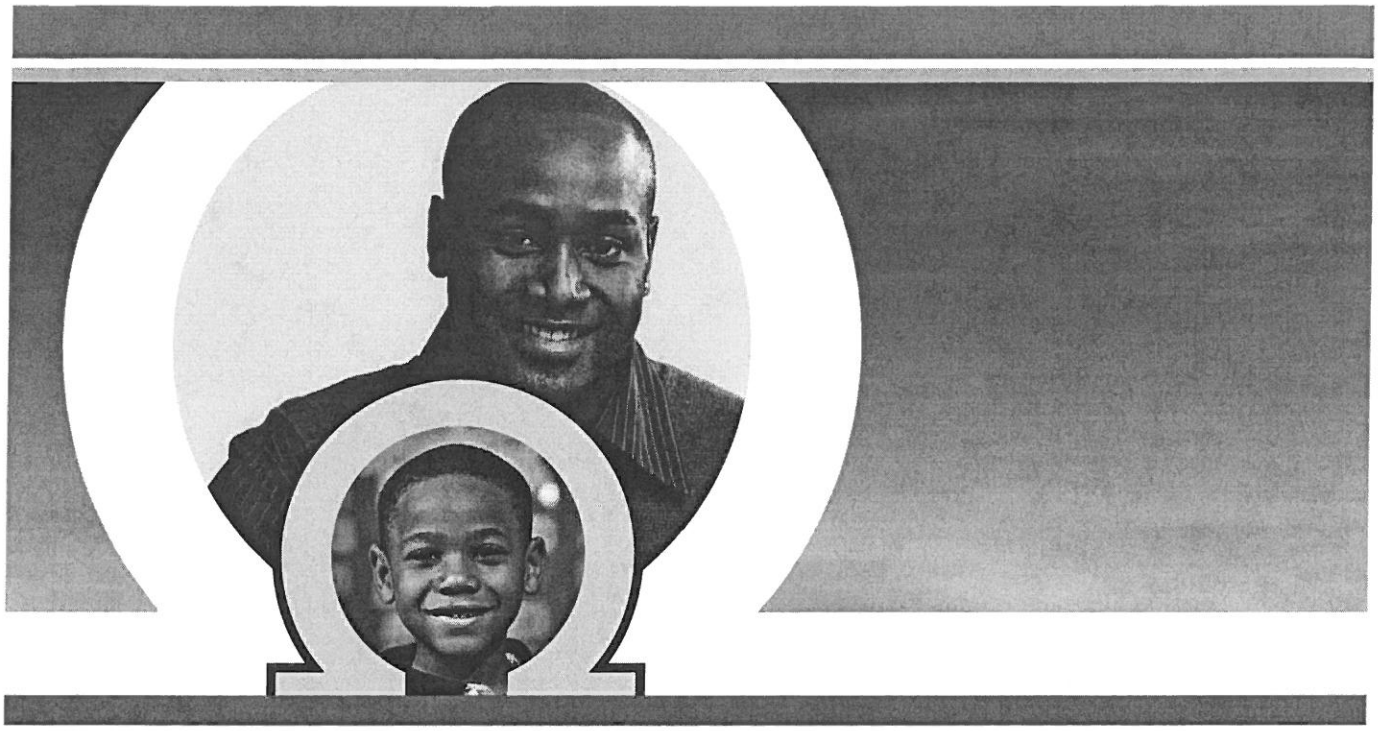
Plan how the program will be managed:

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

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

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

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



Program Management

Ensure the program is well-managed:

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

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

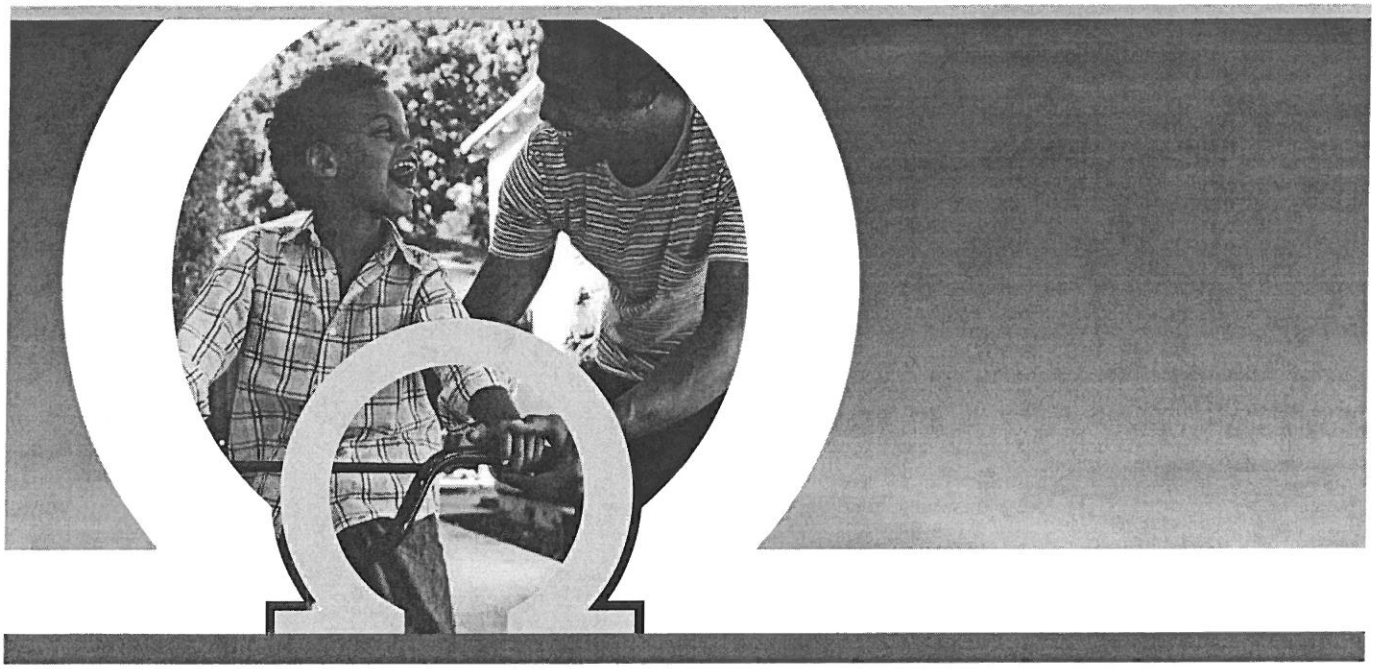
- Design a resource development plan that allows for diversified fundraising:
  - Seek in-kind gifts;
  - Hold special events;
  - Solicit individual donors;
  - Seek corporate donations;
  - Apply for government funding; and
  - Seek foundation grants.

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

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

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

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



Program Operations

Ensure strong, everyday operations:

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

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

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

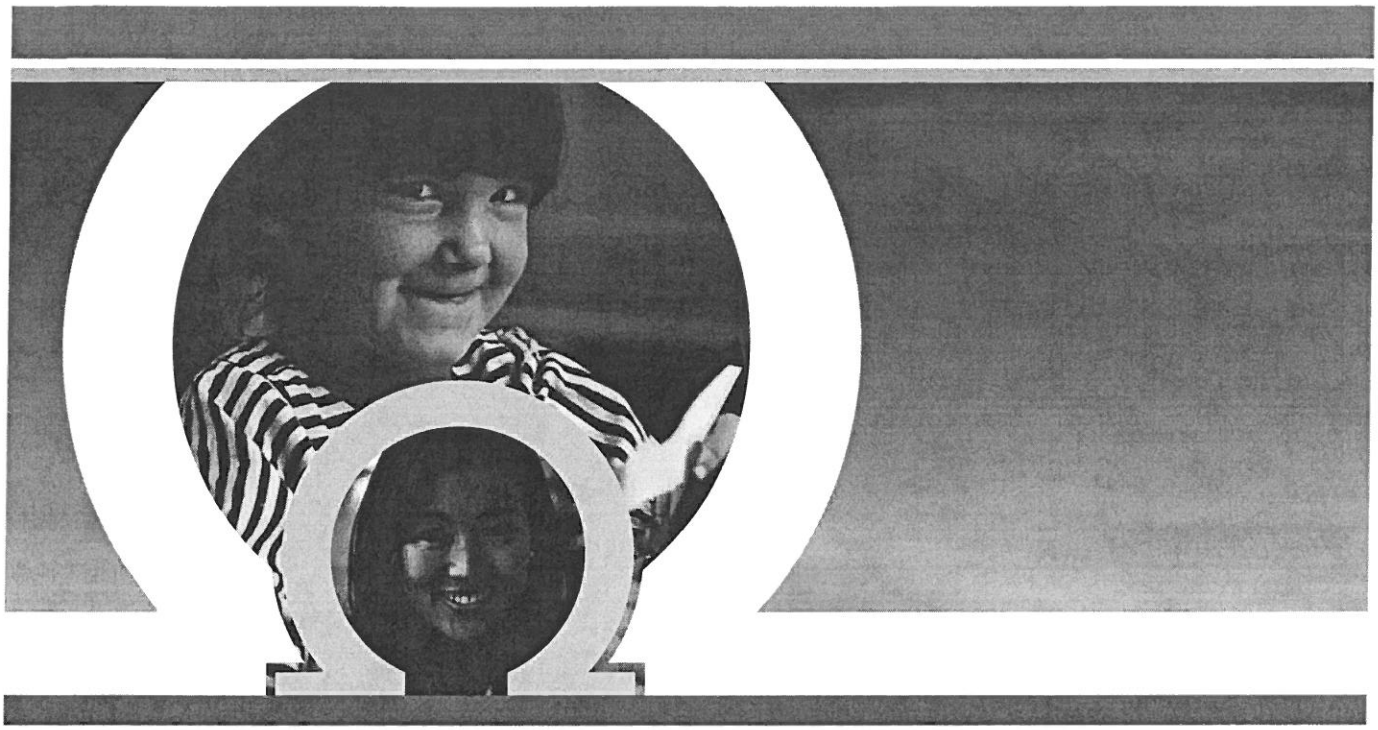
- Match mentors and mentees:
  - Use established criteria;
  - Arrange an introduction between mentors and mentees; and
  - Ensure mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers understand and agree to the terms and conditions of program participation.

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

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

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

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



Program Evaluation

Ensure program quality and effectiveness:

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

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

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

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

Glossary of Terms:

Responsible mentoring:

- Is a structured, one-to-one relationship or partnership that focuses on the needs of mentored participants.
- Fosters caring and supportive relationships.
- Encourages individuals to develop to their fullest potential.
- Helps an individual to develop his or her own vision for the future.
- Is a strategy to develop active community partnerships.

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

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

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

Acknowledgments

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Phoenix House of New York
Points of Light/Hands on Network
Public/Private Ventures
Redwood Community Action Agency
Retired OPM
Special Olympics (e-Buddies)
United Way of America
Youth Build
YouthFriends
YouthToday

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PROGRAM LIABILITY AND RISK MANAGEMENT

Note: These guidelines are geared toward workplace mentoring programs and can be used as a guide in designing other types of mentoring programs.

The Nonprofit Risk Management Center (www.nonprofitrisk.org) defines risk management as a "discipline for dealing with uncertainty." The area of greatest uncertainty, or risk, in a mentoring program involves the potential for harm to the young person being mentored. A growing body of research and information on mentoring best practices provides a framework for designing a prudent risk management system.

The following information is adapted in part from *More Than A Matter of Trust: Managing The Risks of Mentoring* by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, from "Program Liability: Sixteen Steps To Ensure Maximum Protection For Your Program" by Dr. Susan G. Weinberger and from *Elements of Effective Practice* by MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership.

None of the following information is intended to provide, nor should it be construed as, legal advice. Mentoring programs and businesses should always involve their own legal counsel as they take on a youth mentoring role.

Businesses involved in youth mentoring need to be particularly concerned about two aspects of risk management: (1) program structure, policies, and practices of the school or community organization where their employees will mentor and (2) appropriate screening, training and supervision/support of employees who volunteer as mentors.

Program Design, Parameters, and Policies and Practices

Before agreeing to involve their employees in a youth mentoring program, businesses should consider, and ask their legal department to review, each of the following factors. The business should also ask about the school or community organization's liability insurance as well as examine its own liability insurance and review all applicable local and state laws and regulations (e.g., tuberculin tests required for school volunteers). Some larger programs establish a risk management committee involving legal and insurance expertise.

Program Design

The school or community organization should be clear about its definition of mentoring and its program design (i.e., school-based vs. community-based; one-to-one vs. group mentoring, etc.) Because the term *mentoring* is often used loosely to describe youth–adult contacts such as tutoring and job shadowing, which usually do not involve any volunteer screening, supervision, or observance of effective mentoring practices, businesses should make sure that the program actually *is* a mentoring program and, as such, meets the *Elements of Effective Practice* as defined.

The program design should also reflect special needs and circumstances of the youth being mentored. For example, the program design would be quite different for youth who just need extra attention and support at school vs. youth with disabilities vs. youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system vs. youth who are interested in pursuing a technology career and so on.

Partnership/Collaboration Parameters
Businesses should make sure that the conditions and expectations for their involvement with a school or community organization are clearly defined. This includes issues such as where and when mentoring will occur; who is responsible for transportation if applicable; who will keep program records; who will screen, select and supervise the mentors; and who will enforce program policies. A process to respond to and resolve conflicts should also be defined. Roles and responsibilities of the school or community organization and its mentoring coordinator, and the roles and responsibilities of the business, its coordinator and employees who volunteer as mentors, should be clearly defined.

Program Policies and Practices
Program policies and practices should be defined in writing. In addition to reflecting an appropriate program design and core quality standards, these policies and procedures should take into consideration special needs and circumstances of the youth being mentored. These policies and procedures should also explicitly address issues such as the following:

- **The mentoring site should be clearly defined.** Site-based mentoring occurs only at a specified location or at off-site locations (such as a field trip) and involves all the children in the program. Site-based programs always have program staff at the site. Community-based programs occur anywhere the mentor and mentee choose and require more intensive screening and supervision.

- **Contact between the mentor and mentee** outside the program should be prohibited in school-based or other site-based programs. Prohibited outside contact includes, especially, overnight stays at the mentor's home.

- **Safety measures** should be clearly defined, and all mentors should receive appropriate training to understand them. Training should address basic information about site safety and emergency evacuation procedures, use of seatbelts if mentors will be transporting youth, guidelines for bringing health or mental health issues to the program coordinator's attention, reporting of suspected child abuse to the program coordinator and so on.

- **The time commitment** should be clear up front to all volunteers. A minimum time commitment of one year or school year is recommended; premature relationship termination may be harmful to the youth. Most programs involve an hour-per-week commitment.

- **Conflict resolution, grievance, and relationship termination** policies and practices should be defined and agreed to by both the business and program site and should be explained to all mentors.

- **Mentoring activities** should reflect the goals of the program and special needs of the youth. The program may be prescriptive in defining activities or leave them up to the discretion of the mentors.

- **Transportation** needs of the program and mentors' roles should be defined. For example, a business might transport youth to its site, a school may include field trips in its program, or a church-based program for children of prisoners may want to take youth and mentors to visit the incarcerated parent. The program site and the business should determine in advance who will provide, pay for and be responsible for transportation liability issues. If the mentor will be expected to help provide transportation, the screening procedures should address this and include additional motor vehicle and insurance checks. Parent or guardian permission must also be obtained.

- **Participation of family members** should be decided as part of the program design, and parent permission should always be secured for youth participation. Some level of parent involvement is encouraged though special events during the program year; however, if siblings are going to be involved, they should be enrolled in the program.

- **Gifts** between the mentor and mentee are discouraged, especially in site-based programs where youth can readily see what others are getting. The business and program may decide to provide a gift from the program to each young person for a holiday or at the end of the year. A related area is the expectations regarding mentors' use of their own money for activity-related costs. Generally this is strongly discouraged, but in some cases mentors are provided a small stipend to cover such costs.

Volunteer Screening, Training, and Supervision and Support

This is the area of greatest potential liability for all involved in a youth mentoring program. Following are issues the business should particularly pay attention to.

Volunteer Screening

Businesses can use the application and screening processes outlined in the Tool Kit with their potential school or community partner to ensure that appropriate screening practices are used. The screening should be appropriate to the program design. From a risk management perspective, it is always better to err on the side of more rather than less screening, and background checks are strongly recommended. The business should take into consideration the fact that employees do not always observe program policies. More than one business has learned that its employees are taking youth to their homes against program policies.

Most programs refuse to accept volunteers who have a history of child sexual abuse, convictions for a crime involving children or a history of violent or sexually exploitive behavior, even though they may now be rehabilitated. Other volunteer opportunities not involving direct contact with youth may be offered if available. It should be noted that there are no studies documenting a relationship between sexual orientation and child molestation.

Mentor Orientation and Training

Adequate mentor preparation is an important risk management issue to ensure that safe, appropriate mentoring relationships develop. The minimum recommended initial training is two hours.

After the initial training that covers the role and responsibilities of the program and the mentor, basics of effective mentoring, program policies and logistics, statutory requirements, confidentiality and accident/emergency procedures and special needs of the children, additional training should be available on topics of mentor concern such as cultural competency, conflict resolution, understanding child development and career mentoring strategies. Given the constraints of releasing employees to attend training, businesses may negotiate with the program site to develop a training schedule that fits their needs.

Mentor Supervision and Support

The primary responsibility for this function lies with the program site coordinator; however, it is recommended that the business coordinator inquire about and monitor how employees are being supervised and supported. The Nonprofit Risk Management Center cautions that the standard of care is defined by the activity, so supervision should be appropriate to the level of activity involved. Being a reading mentor to a third grader requires less supervision than mentoring an at-risk high school student.

Following are some supervision practices recommended by the Nonprofit Risk Management Center:

- **General supervision** should include sign-in/out procedures, monitoring drop-off and pick-up activities, monitoring the program facilities and parking lots and oversight of mentoring activities.

- **Specific supervision** involves oversight of specific mentoring activities and monitoring of mentoring relationships. Such supervision should include the site coordinator being present during mentoring activities, weekly check-ins, and minimum monthly meetings during the first few months of the relationship. If the relationship is going well, monthly check-ins should occur and may be by telephone if meetings are not feasible. Monitoring the relationship during the early stages is particularly important so any problems can be detected and resolved and termination processes, if necessary, can be initiated earlier rather than later to minimize harm to the young person. Each supervision contact, any mentor or coordinator concerns and follow-up action should be documented.

Employees should also be told to contact their company program coordinator in case of concerns, conflicts, or questions that are not being addressed. The company coordinator can then address them with the program site coordinator. As noted earlier, the business and program site should have defined conflict resolution and grievance procedures that include steps to terminate a relationship if necessary.

Finally, businesses should inquire about the supervision process for the site coordinator to ensure that he or she is performing effectively.