

- What to do when things aren't working out with a mentor (basic problem-solving and conflict resolution skills).

Invite parents/caregivers to the orientation and hold a question-and-answer session afterward to allay any fears and address additional concerns. Parental participation and consent are crucial to creating the atmosphere for a successful mentoring relationship. Assure the parent/caregiver that the mentor's primary role is to provide guidance and friendship to the child, not to become a substitute parent. Involve parents/caregivers by asking them to do the following:

- Notify their child's mentor or the program coordinator when their child can't make it to a scheduled meeting;
- Attend and help with group meetings or end-of-year celebrations; and
- Meet with the program coordinator to share concerns and assess progress.

MATCH MENTORS AND MENTEES

A review of "What Makes a Successful Mentoring Relationship?" in Section III will be helpful as you embark on matching young people with the most appropriate mentors. When you are considering potential matches, ensure that the prospective mentor and mentee:

- Meet your program's eligibility criteria;
- Share some or all of the following traits: gender, age, language requirements, availability, needs, interests, geography, life experience and temperament; and
- Are committed to the conditions of the match and the mentoring relationship.

MENTORING TOOL

See matching criteria, in Section VI on the CD.

Successfully matching mentors with youth takes preparation. Give mentors and mentees an opportunity to do the following:

- State their needs and personal preferences with regard to the match;
- Know how matching decisions are made; and
- Request a different match if, after a reasonable effort, the original match is not satisfactory.

Use Established Criteria

In matching mentors with young people, you'll need to use preestablished criteria, which may include these points of compatibility:

- **Personal preferences.** Mentors and youth may request someone of the same gender, a certain age range or another characteristic. You should honor such requests whenever possible.
- **Temperament.** Try to ensure that personality and behavior styles mesh. Does the mentor have a nurturing, familial approach or a more formal approach? Match the mentor with a young person who responds best to that mentor's particular style.
- **Life experiences and interests.** All else being equal, matches made on the basis of similarities (e.g., hobbies, lifestyle and family makeup) usually lead to strong relationships. (See Dr. Jean Rhodes' article "What Makes Mentoring Work," which can be found in the Research Corner at Mentoring.org.)
- **Race.** Depending on your program's goals, race may be an important factor in the matching process. Pairing mentors with young people of the same race can encourage greater candor and frankness. That kind of strong rapport between mentors and young people is essential in forging a trusting, long-term relationship.

Some programs allow young people to choose their own mentors. Self-selection can help relationships form more naturally, on the basis of mutual interest. On the downside, this may mean a mentor's preference can't be honored. Mentors or youth who do not get their first choice may be disappointed.

Arrange an Introduction Between Mentors and Mentees

After you have matched a mentor with a mentee; give each one basic information about the other. The type of information you provide will depend on the type of mentoring you offer. For example, if your mentoring pairs meet strictly on site at a school or community center, you would not provide home addresses and telephone numbers. On the other hand, if your program is community-based and allows pairs to meet on their own in the community, you would need to supply personal contact information.

It's up to the program coordinator to determine how best to arrange for mentors and mentees to meet for the first time. Pairs can meet in a group setting or individually. Some programs hold a group meeting and provide mentors and mentees with nametags. Mentees must mingle in the crowd to find their mentor. Icebreakers are useful for the first mentoring meetings; for example, you could have mentors and mentees interview each other.

Ensure Mentors, Mentees and Parents/ Caregivers Understand and Agree to the Terms and Conditions of Program Participation

All participants should have signed an agreement in which they commit to follow the program's guidelines on training, frequency of contact, confidentiality and meeting documentation. The first meeting is a good time to reinforce these guidelines with mentors and mentees and get them excited about their new relationship.

Rematching Mentors and Mentees

Before you attempt to rematch a mentor with another mentee (or vice versa), the program coordinator should meet with each person to discuss whether it would be



MENTORING TOOL

See icebreakers and group activities in Section VI on the CD.

possible for either or both to improve their match by making some changes.

You may want to insist on a cooling-off period before you attempt a new mentor/mentee match, especially if either partner is angry or needs to learn more interaction skills. It's important for both the mentor and the mentee to feel closure with their previous relationship before they are matched with someone else. You may need to divert the mentor's energy into volunteering in another capacity if that individual seems unable to work well as a one-to-one mentor. In some cases, you may need to end a volunteer's involvement altogether.

Despite your best efforts, some matches will falter, but you don't have to struggle with these challenges alone. Look to the appropriate resources listed here or turn to mentoring peer professionals or MENTOR's State and Local *Mentoring Partnerships* for guidance or support before you dissolve a troubled mentoring relationship. Learn from these experiences and apply the lessons to the successful matches you'll be making in the future.

Review "Provide Ongoing Support, Supervision and Monitoring of Mentoring Relationships" later in this section for additional information on troubleshooting matches and recommendations on how best to provide support and monitoring of mentoring relationships in your program.

BRING MENTORS AND MENTEES TOGETHER FOR MENTORING SESSIONS THAT FALL WITHIN THE PROGRAM PARAMETERS

Provide Safe Locations and Circumstances

It's paramount that program participants meet in safe and comfortable locations. Mentoring meetings and activities form the basis for the development of trusting and caring relationships between mentors and mentees. Successful mentoring programs do the following:

- Foster a sense of ownership and belonging among volunteers and participants. Be sure to get participants involved in planning program activities.

- Sponsor a mix of group activities that support program goals and encourage interaction among all participants in addition to one-to-one activities. Group activities foster a sense of community for both mentors and mentees, providing informal support for the mentors and a strong support system for mentees. Examples of group activities are field trips, social get-togethers, community service projects, recreational/cultural events, awards and recognition events and skill-building workshops.



MENTORING TOOL

See activity ideas, goal-setting forms and Internet resources in Section VI on the CD.

Provide Resources and Materials for Activities

Although the final mix of activities will be decided in part by the mentors and participants, some activities should be built into the program design and are strongly encouraged.

EXAMPLES OF MENTOR ACTIVITIES

Type of Activity	Examples
Skill-building workshop	Interviewing practice, goal setting
Social get-together	Picnic, potluck dinner, parents' night
Recreational/cultural	Concerts, sporting events, mentoring program sports teams (bowling, softball)
Field trips	Museums, colleges, local businesses
Community service	Neighborhood cleanup
Awards/recognition	Parent/family night, formal reception

PROVIDE ONGOING SUPPORT, SUPERVISION AND MONITORING OF MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS¹²

Successful mentoring relationships do not just happen. Although most mentoring pairs will derive enough pleasure from the experience to keep them going, some reach an impasse that makes them begin to doubt their willingness to continue. That's why providing ongoing support and supervision is so important.



MENTORING TOOL

See survey forms and guidelines in Section VI on the CD.

Offer Continuing Training Opportunities for Program Participants

Programs should offer special training sessions on a wide array of topics, including

diversity and cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, problem-solving skills, teen sexuality and pregnancy, communication skills and skills for setting limits. In the "Orient and Train Mentors, Mentees and Parents/Caregivers" section, we listed some possible training topics. You may also want to repeat popular training topics.

Communicate Regularly with Program Participants and Offer Support

The program coordinator should contact each mentor within the first two weeks of the match to see how things are going, then follow up every two weeks for the next few months. Contact can be made by phone, by e-mail or in person. Once the relationship appears to be making progress, the program coordinator might try contacting mentors once a month to ensure that the match continues to make progress and to address any problems that may arise.

Another way to offer support to participants is to observe and interact with mentors and young people during planned activities.