



Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

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Northwest Regional
Educational Laboratory

NATIONAL MENTORING CENTER BULLETIN

Supporting Your Mentors

A few simple strategies can make your volunteers feel valued

As any mentoring coordinator can attest, creating a supportive atmosphere for your mentors can easily get lost in all of the other administrative priorities and functions you face each day. You spend so much of your time recruiting, screening, fundraising, and partnering with schools, churches, and community organizations that the time you have to provide individual attention and support to your mentors is often limited and unfortunately overlooked.

The good news is that with a few very simple steps, you can show your commitment and support to those volunteers who foster, guide, and encourage our youth. By making gestures to your mentors that they are very much cared about, valued, and needed to make your efforts successful, you will be increasing the likelihood that they will be long-term partners in your program. This investment will likely result in longer term matches, higher mentor retention

rates, increased recognition in the community, and greater possibility for fulfilling more promises to even more youth.

The following simple strategies can create opportunities to fully induct mentors into your program:

Introduce Your Program

When a new mentor arrives, take the time to introduce your mentoring program. This should not be done hastily. You should build an introduction that describes the culture, history, goals, and successes of your program. Discuss why your program was started and what motivated you to get involved. Tell stories about the relationships that have formed—why you believe these relationships were (or were

See SUPPORT Page 6

Expand Your Volunteer Pool

Don't forget about people with disabilities when you recruit mentors

As you conduct outreach to ensure a diverse array of mentors, don't overlook the skills and experience that people with disabilities can bring to your program.

Not all people with disabilities will need an accommodation to participate in your mentor training opportunities. Some of those who do will ask for the assistance they need. Others will not. In fact, some won't ask for an accommodation even if it is offered because they feel there is a stigma attached to having

a disability. The older the volunteer, the less likely it is that he or she will ask.

Training Considerations

If you plan ahead, providing equal access to training opportunities and materials can go smoothly. When planning a mentor training event, you should plan for reasonable accommodations for persons at your event. And be sure to budget for those accommodations. But how will you know what accommodations are

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Center's Collection Includes Guides for Training Mentors

Check out the many titles available for boosting mentor skills

The lending library at the National Mentoring Center has a number of excellent resources available to help programs design and implement training programs for mentors. As always, the collection can be searched on the Center's Web site (www.nwrel.org/mentoring/resources.html). Materials may be requested via Interlibrary Loan through your local public library. OJJDP-funded JUMP and SafeFutures mentoring programs may request items directly from the Web site using the password login, or by calling Resource Specialist Michael Garringer at 1-800-547-6339, ext. 647.

These are just a few of the excellent training guides available for loan:

Training Guide for Mentors (1999). An outstanding resource from the National Dropout Prevention Center, this guide covers all aspects of training and orienting volunteer mentors. It contains tips on interacting with today's youth, topics for ongoing training, and specialized training ideas to help volunteers handle unusual situations and difficulties with their mentees.

Mentor Training Curriculum (1991). Produced by the National Mentoring Working Group in conjunction with United Way of America, this curriculum offers detailed workshop outlines. In addition to an extensive session for training mentors, it also contains sections on training trainers and specialized sessions for ongoing training of experienced mentors. Each section contains facilitator notes and participant handouts.

Volunteer Education and Development Manual (1991). This 10-module curriculum, developed by Big Brothers Big Sisters of America, is an excellent resource for strengthening mentoring relationships and preparing mentors to handle difficult mentoring challenges. Each module contains the usual facilitator's notes and handouts. Topics covered include relationship building, working with the mentee's family, child abuse issues, substance abuse, communication skills, and values clarification.

RESOURCE CORNER



Preparing Participants for Intergenerational Interaction: Training for Success (1998).

This book contains a plethora of information that would be useful in any program's training materials. Several chapters present specific training modules, while others outline key concepts and principles that programs can incorporate into their own training methods. Topics covered include sensitivity training related to race, age, and ethnicity; dealing with group dynamics; and successful strategies for working with at-risk youth.

Becoming a Co-Pilot: A Handbook for Mentors of Adolescents. Effective skills and Strategies for Reaching and Encouraging Middle and High School Youth. (1997).

This is a wonderful resource for helping mentors throughout the cycle of their mentoring relationships. It contains strategies for successful beginnings and endings to mentoring relationships, as well as solid advice for helping youths develop and grow with the guidance a mentor provides. It also offers numerous detailed activity suggestions and developmental exercises. The Center also has copies of the companion guide for elementary age youth available for loan.

The Center's own training curriculum, Strengthening Mentoring Programs, is available through our series of regional training conferences. Developed by Public/Private Ventures, and based on 15 years of research into effective program practices and training methods, our curriculum is an invaluable resource for mentor trainers and program administrators. We will be holding two regional conferences in early 2001, and both events will feature workshops based on specific areas of mentor training. To learn more about our curriculum, check our Web site at www.nwrel.org/mentoring/abouttraining.html#currtable.

—Michael Garringer

Training Helps a Mentor Forge A Better Bond with His Mentee

A law student and his young friend benefit from program's guidance

BATON ROUGE, Louisiana—The role of mentor was an easy fit for Johnny Gaspard. “I’m the oldest of four kids, so you could say I’m experienced,” jokes the law student from the Virgin Islands.

The program Gaspard joined is run by the Young Leaders’ Academy, which was founded in 1993 to improve the lives of young African American males in Baton Rouge. Boys from inner-city schools selected in third grade to be part of the 10-year program are mentored by African American men who serve as role models.

Gaspard describes his mentee Scott as “very open with a bubbly personality, a smart kid who loves to read but sometimes doesn’t perform up to his capacity.” In two years together, they have developed a strong relationship. Gaspard takes Scott to church every Sunday and out to eat. Now in his final year at Southern University, Gaspard takes Scott to the law school library where they study together. They go to indoor play places and other events, and Scott frequently calls his mentor on the phone.

While mentoring comes easily to Gaspard, he is grateful for YLA’s trainings. After an initial orientation, mentors are required to attend one of two monthly educational sessions. Psychologists and school counselors give talks on handling issues the mentors encounter. “We went over a number of issues I thought I wouldn’t need to deal with, but I did,” says Gaspard.

Particularly because boys in the program come primarily from low-income, single-parent homes, mentors can be tempted to bring presents. “But they told us, don’t always come with a gift,” says Gaspard. “Sometimes it’s OK, but if you bring one every time, kids will count on it. That’s not what these relationships are about.” Mentors were also cautioned not to get personally involved with their mentee’s family members or act like a substitute Dad—“crossing that sacred line,” as Grace Alexander, Executive Director of the Academy, calls it.

Unexpected questions sometimes come up that Gaspard has to field on his own. “I gave Scott

a Bible with pictures of people of color in it,” Gaspard recounts. “He asked why, when he saw pictures of Jesus and other people in other Bibles, they were always White. I told him: ‘We’ve been brought up in a country where the people who make the Bible are White, and they tend to think of people in the stories as like them. The point of the pictures in the one I gave you is just to let you know that God is like your White friend at school, but God is also like you.’”

Grace Alexander says YLA’s mentor training program is being deepened and enhanced. “We’ll be training mentors more deliberately on what it means to work with children of poverty,” Alexander says. “It’s important for mentors to understand the kids’ socioeconomic background. There will be more role playing using situations mentors are confronted with.”

Recently Gaspard became recruitment coordinator for the program. He calls other mentors before each program-sponsored outing to encourage them to take their mentee. He also asks how the academy can help them be a better mentor. “YLA used to just publish a calendar of events, but Grace and I didn’t think that was enough,” says Gaspard. “Personal contact helps encourage more involvement. If a mentor really can’t make an event, I arrange for his mentee to go with someone else so that kid doesn’t miss out.”

These days, Scott listens better. “Having a male voice helps,” says Gaspard. “Also, now that we really trust each other, he’s even more open. And since I’ve been checking up on his homework, he knows he’s more sure about turning it in.”

Gaspard also describes a boy more willing to take risks. “We went to an indoor play place recently,” he says. “Scott didn’t want to go in a go-cart on his own. In the trainings, we’d heard that all kids sometimes need reassurance. So I told him, ‘Go on, man, it’s safe. I’ll be right here.’ He got in cautiously, and at first he drove slowly. But by the end, he didn’t want to get out of the car.”

—Maya Muir

SUCCESS STORY

“We went over a number of issues I thought I wouldn’t need to deal with, but I did.”

Innovations in Recruitment: Small Idea Reaps Big Success

A California program finds new ways to reach out for volunteers

PROGRAM PROFILE

EAST BAY, California—Until recently, attracting volunteers was tough for Students In Business, Inc. The nonprofit, community-based organization has helped school districts



establish mentoring programs in California's East Bay since 1993. But recruiting new mentors was always problematic—especially because of the frantic pace of life in the Silicon Valley. “Everyone works such long hours,” says Associate Director Sherry Jennings-King. “And then

there's the commuting. Plus people want time with their families.”

For years, several employees of Students In Business (SIB) spent all their time making pitches for the program at brown-bag lunches at businesses and service organizations such as Kiwanis and Elks. “Out of 50 people you'd talk to, four or five might be interested,” says Jennings-King. “Of those, maybe two would make it through the screening. Only one would actually become a mentor.”

Recently, however, a new strategy has begun reaping very different results. An advertising agency offered to create pro bono materials for the program. The idea was simple: They designed small, brightly colored, plastic stands holding business cards that read “Mentors Make a Difference: Be One.” The stands bear the same message, with the additional message, “Be a mentor. Touch a Life.” The cards have the program's hotline number and its Web address, www.beamentor.org. “We have 200 of these stands out in the community now,” Jennings-King reports. “People see them everywhere. They may not respond the first time they see the cards, but after the fourth or fifth time, they're more likely to. The cards are super-handly.”

Now, instead of spending time soliciting people who aren't interested, program staff wait for people who are interested to come to them, Jennings-King says. One recent week produced 12 applications—an all-time record for the program.

The new recruitment strategy has been so successful, in fact, that SIB is now marketing promotional materials and related services to other mentoring programs across the country. In addition to selling card stands and customized cards, SIB offers use of its “Be A Mentor” Web site, where applicants get referrals to appropriate agencies in their community. SIB also provides full screening of applicants, training of staff or faculty, and ongoing technical assistance by phone, e-mail, or site visits.

The Students In Business mentoring program was originally created for high school students. But in 1999, SIB branched out. That was the year it received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice—one of only 73 nationwide—to start a program at a Hayward Middle School. Ongoing funding for the high school programs comes from the federal Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP), and a variety of state, county, city, and corporate sources. When someone applies to be a mentor, he or she goes through a rigorous screening that includes fingerprinting, Department of Justice clearance, a tuberculosis check, and two references. Prospective mentors must also furnish copies of their driver's license and car insurance. Only then are mentors matched with students.

At the start of their relationship—which must at least a one-year commitment—mentors help their charges come up with three goals: one personal, one academic, and one about career exploration. Over their year together, mentors help students make progress toward all three goals. Currently through SIB, 200 students in 16 schools in Oakland, San Lorenzo, Hayward, and Fremont meet with mentors one-to-one for four to six hours per month.

YOU'VE GOT MAIL!

Virtual mentors correspond with kids online

SANTA CLARA, California—
E-mail is a new avenue for connecting kids with caring adults.

With a grant from Intel Corporation, Students In Business is linking kids with Intel employees who might be too busy to meet face-to-face. Now in its second year, the program is designed to help students research school topics and do class projects via the World Wide Web. It is also aimed at encouraging students' interest in science and math and increasing their understanding of careers in related fields.

Intensive screening is not needed for this style of mentoring. But to guard against any inappropriate discussions or interactions, a service called gaggle.net screens all messages. If anything questionable is found, the message is routed to the student's classroom teacher. If the student shows any sign of severe depression or if a tendency toward violence is detected, a "red-flag" procedure is set in motion.

During the first year of the program, 148 Intel employees mentored 148 students. Jennings-King says students found it useful, and sometimes relationships grew beyond just research assistance. "I know of one match," she says, "who now play virtual chess with each other." Several companies in addition to Intel are getting into the act, setting up similar programs.

"Virtual mentoring gives people in the high-tech world the flexibility to offer their skills with very little time commitment," says one former e-mail mentor. "Most importantly, it taps a pool of people who wouldn't have participated in the conventional mentoring program.

"It's good for the mentees, too," she adds. "They get to ask anything they can put into words and expect a prompt response. I wish I'd had this opportunity when I was a student!"

—Maya Muir

Not all interactions take place at school. Jennings-King, who was herself a mentor, worked with a girl who was interested in archeology. "I don't know anything about that field," admits Jennings-King, "but I took her to visit a friend of mine who studied paleontology at the University of California at Berkeley. We also looked up information about it on the Web."

A student in Fremont came to the mentoring program because she was slipping academically and feeling lost in high school. At the beginning, the student reports, "My mentor and I went out to eat, talk, share silly jokes, and get to know each other.

Now she helps me with my school projects; she was there when I took my driver's license test (in her car!), and she helped me get a job. And now I have a 3.83 GPA!"

In addition to meeting with mentors one-to-one, all the mentees meet monthly with each other and their mentors for special programs. "We always make them fun," says Jennings-King. "We do skill-building activities, things like that. Each time, one mentor will talk about what his or her job entails."

—Maya Muir

SUPPORT: (continued from page 1)

not) a good match. Even better, invite current or past mentors to share their stories in a panel format, encouraging questions and the sharing and passing on of personal experience. By taking the time to thoroughly introduce your program through this personal approach, you leave your new mentors with the important message that each story and individual is valued in your program and that they are a welcome addition.

Provide Opportunities for Reflection

Another important and often overlooked component of mentor development is the inclusion of personal reflection in our training and ongoing support. By creating opportunities for your mentors to think about their experiences, you can create a valuable learning tool that will help them process their experience with their match, your program, and their lives.

Life Maps

A great and simple activity for fostering thought and reflection in your mentors is a "Life Map." This reflection activity involves mentors drawing a "map" of their lives leading up to their decision to volunteer with your program. The only instruction involves asking mentors to include some of the "mile posts," "road blocks," and "scenery" that they passed on their journey to your program. During this activity, it is important to let the mentors know that they should share whatever they feel comfortable with. This is a great opening activity for a first-time interaction with youth and mentors as well!

Building a Community

Another way that you can create a supportive atmosphere for your mentors is to foster the relationships among them. By building a community for mentors to receive advice and encouragement from each other, you will be creating a network of problem-solvers, nurturers, and learners. Through this investment, you will build a front line of support givers. (Over the long run, this will ultimately save you time, because you will no longer need to provide all of the direct support.)

There are several easy ways to informally and formally build this type of mentor community. These include "mailboxes," promoting informal social gatherings, and starting and maintaining program traditions.

Mailboxes.

Open communication is essential for keeping your mentors informed and up-to-date about program happenings and changes. Mailboxes are a great way to demonstrate a commitment to keeping your mentors involved in what's happening throughout your program. A great and creative way for you to simulate the use of mailboxes is through the use of paper bags. During your orientation, you can provide each of your mentors with a paper bag. Ask him or her to write out their name and decorate it with personal meaning that resonates with the qualities that this individual values or respects. Hang these bag "mailboxes" in an easily accessible central location. Throughout the course of the mentoring relationship, drop inspirational quotes, thank you notes, newsletters, and other materials that show the mentor that you care and that you are there for them. Also, encourage them to do the same for each other.

Social gatherings.

Encourage your mentors to get together informally. By encouraging networks to form, you strengthen the ties between your mentors, and ultimately, your program. Potlucks are a great way to encourage social gatherings between your mentors. Start the year off with a program-sponsored get-together and encourage your mentors to continue the process on their own—once a season, once a month, once a week! This is a great way for your mentors to share experiences and a communal meal together.

Traditions/mentor quilts.

Traditions build cohesion and bridges generations in families and communities. So why not create traditions that do these same things in your mentoring program? At the end of the year, a great tradition that you can incorporate into your program revolves around the creation of a mentor "quilt." Provide mentors with blank quilt pieces (paper or fabric) that they can decorate with their mentees. During a year-end ceremony, sew (or glue/tape) together each of these pieces to make a quilt that represents all the experiences, relationships, and growth that have happened. Hang this in a central location—to let everyone know about the relationships that have been formed.

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The National Mentoring Center Bulletin

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POOL: (continued from page 1)

needed? Federal law says you may not ask a person if he or she has a disability. But you can ask if attendees need an accommodation to fully participate in an event. You must, however, ask this of all training participants, not just those who you think may have a disability. Furthermore, information regarding a person's disability cannot be shared with others. That means, for instance, that you cannot inform-school staff of a mentor's disability without the written permission of that person

If your training is being announced in print format, provide a "reasonable accommodations" section on the event registration form. This is especially important if the event is open to the general public—a mentor recruitment event, for example. One way to get information on needed accommodations is to include a statement such as this: "If you have a disability and you desire an accommodation, please contact Jane Doe at 1-800-111-0000 or jane.doe@mentoringplace.org. Another strategy is to list basic accommodations with check-off boxes, along with blank space where the volunteer can fill in specific information. Listing a cut-off date for registration will give you time to arrange for accommodations if they are needed. Two weeks prior to the training is a standard cut-off point. Basic accommodations include such items as:

- Interpreter Services (ASL, PSE, Oral)
- Large Print
- Disk copy
- Amplified Sound (Microphones)
- Cassette Tapes
- Handouts in Advance
- Assistive Listen System
- Other, Specify

Many hearing-impaired individuals do well with one-to-one communications but may need an amplified sound system, such as microphones or an assistive listening system, when participating in a group meeting. Others with hearing loss, including the deaf, may request real-time captioning, an oral interpreter, or a sign language interpreter. Persons with visual impairments may desire materials in large print, on cassette tape, on computer disk, or in Braille. Volunteers with learning disabilities often

FAST FACTS

- Studies based on data collected by the National Center for Health Statistics in 1992 suggest that 15 percent of the non-institutionalized population—about 38 million people—experience some activity limitation because of chronic health conditions or impairments
- Analyses of the 1994 U.S. Bureau of the Census data suggests that more than 20 percent of the general population—about 54 million people—live with some level of disability.
- The incidence of disability is higher among those older Americans—more than 20 percent of those who are between 45 and 55 and nearly 40 percent of those over 65.

Sources:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

benefit from having the handouts provided to them in advance of a meeting to allow additional time to review the information. Persons with chemical sensitivities may request that all participants refrain from wearing scented products such as perfume, hair spray, or scented deodorant. Not only persons with cognitive disabilities but also the general population benefit when training information is provided in several formats, including auditory and visual (a combination of print, overheads, and notes on newsprint), as well as interactively, such as small-group exercises.

When an accommodation is requested but you are unclear what is needed, call the person requesting the accommodation to get clarification.

If you receive funding from a federal governmental agency, you are required to provide equal access for people with disabilities to your programs and services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. Private nonprofits and state or local governments must provide access as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. For more information, contact your local Disability & Business Technical Assistance Center at 1-800-949-4ADA.

—Vikki Rennick

SUPPORT: (continued from page 6)**Bringing It Together**

These suggestions, while not applicable to every program, can be adapted to fit the specific size and focus of any group. These are just a few examples of possible activities, but the concepts within them are vital and should be present in whatever activities you choose for your program.

Most important to remember, your show of appreciation and support in your current volunteers and mentors is an investment. By creating an open, communicative atmosphere that welcomes and embraces its volunteers, your program will be rewarded by greater respect from your volunteers and community. This will, in turn, equal higher retention rates—and that's good for kids!

—Christian Rummell

**NEWS
BRIEFS****■ DR. DAVIS GOES TO WASHINGTON (AND BEYOND)**

Dr. Kay Davis, Director of the National Mentoring Center since its inception in 1998, has left to take a post with the U.S. State Department as an English Language Officer. Currently training in Washington D.C., she will soon be positioned at an overseas post where she will assist countries in the development of English teaching curricula, textbooks, and teacher training workshops and will provide academic expertise and consultative assistance.

Dr. Davis was instrumental in making the Center a nationally recognized resource in the mentoring field. Through her work with BBBSA, P/PV, and OJJDP, she laid the groundwork for the Center's training and technical assistance efforts. The staff wish her all the best in her new venture.

■ NEW NMC PUBLICATIONS ON THE WAY

Within the next few months the National Mentoring Center will begin releasing a new series of publications designed to assist programs with certain "hot topics" in the field of mentoring. The first of the technical assistance packets is a comprehensive guide to developing an effective school-based mentoring program. Packet 2 will examine the need for specialized mentoring strategies for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth.

There will be a total of eight packets, all developed by Public/Private Ventures, released over the next year. As always, they will be available for download on the Web site, and programs may request a hard copy by e-mailing the Center at: mentorcenter@nwrel.org.



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