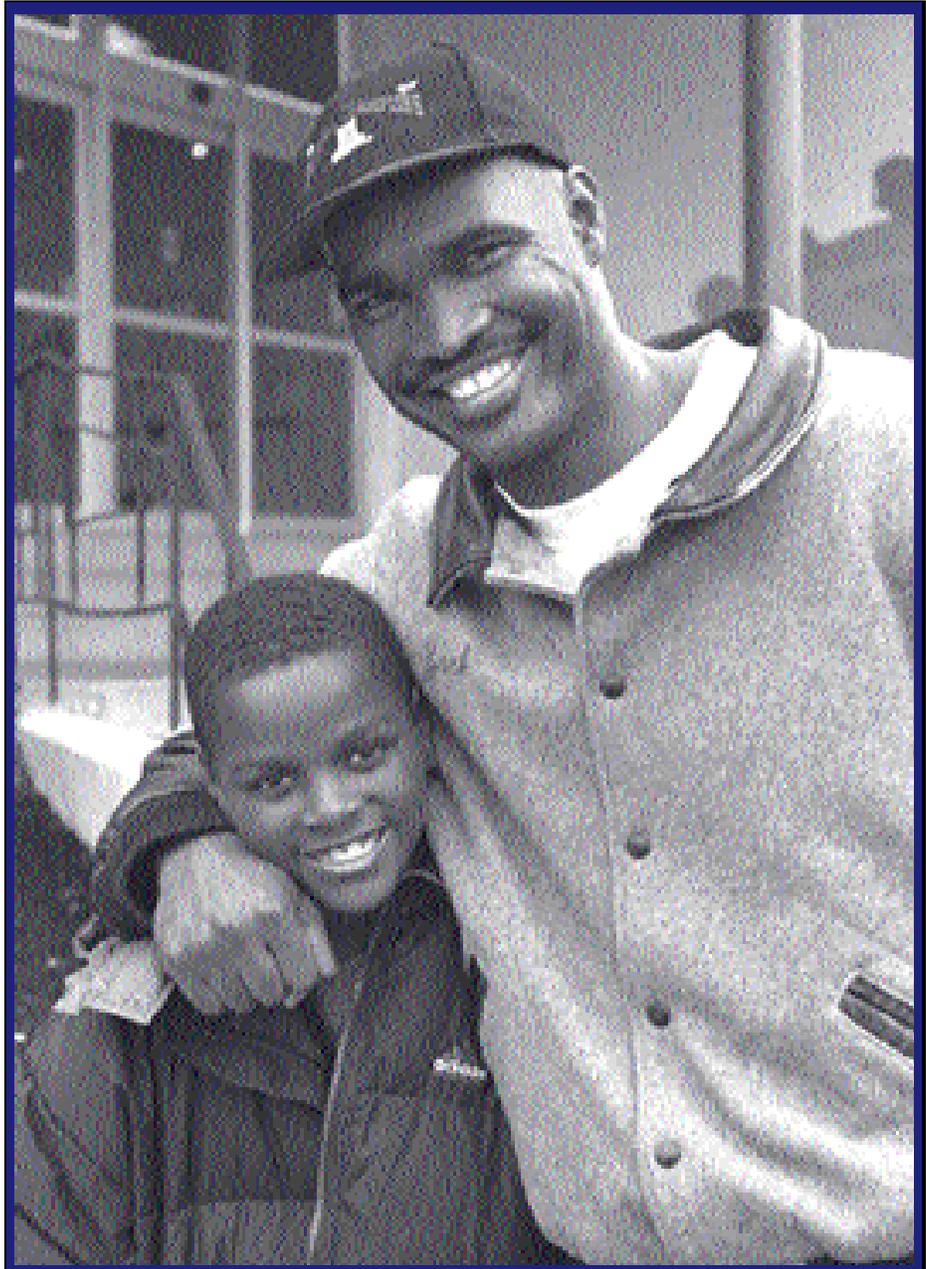
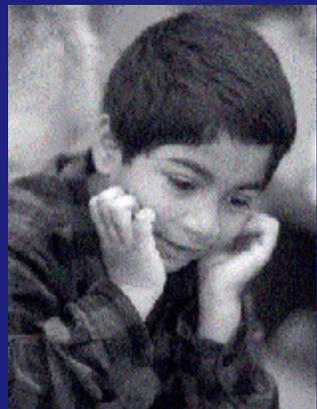


# *Foundations of Successful Youth Mentoring: A Guidebook for Program Development*



Northwest Regional  
Educational Laboratory



Office of Juvenile Justice  
and Delinquency Prevention

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**March 2003**



**Northwest Regional  
Educational Laboratory**



**Office of Juvenile Justice  
and Delinquency Prevention**

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# **INTRODUCTION**

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- ✓ About This Guidebook

## Acknowledgments

This publication was developed under a cooperative agreement with the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The National Mentoring Center (NMC) would like to thank OJJDP for its continued support for the development of resources and tools that benefit mentoring programs nationwide. The NMC would also like to acknowledge the 266 agencies funded under the OJJDP's Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP). Our interactions with these agencies during the last four years have taught us much about the critical components of a successful youth mentoring program.

The NMC would also like to thank our partner agencies Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (BBBSA), Public/Private Ventures (P/PV), and Information

Technology International (ITI) for their critical insights and systematic review of mentoring program development. Finally, we would like to thank the following individuals who participated in the conceptual development of this publication including Joyce Corlett, Janet Forbush, Carla Herrera, Rene Hoover, Jodi Jaworski, Jayme Marshall, Elizabeth Mertinko, Larry Novotney, John Patterson, Christian Rummell, and Dr. Susan Weinberger.

This publication was written by Michael Garringer with assistance from Mark Fulop and Vikki Rennick. The text was edited by Eugenia Cooper Potter, with assistance from Linda Fitch on references. Michael Heavener provided graphic design and print production support.

## About the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, an agency of the Office of Justice Programs, United States Department of Justice, provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP accomplishes this by supporting states and local communities in their efforts to

develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects the public safety, holds offenders accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of families and each individual juvenile.

## About the National Mentoring Center

The National Mentoring Center (NMC), a project of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL), was created in 1998 with funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The NMC, with its key partners—Big Brothers Big Sisters of America and Public/Private Ventures—provides support to the OJJDP-funded JUMP grantees and other youth mentoring projects nationwide.

The NMC assists mentoring projects in developing and implementing evidence-based programs through a variety of training and technical assistance activities, information services, the development and dissemination of print publications, and by conducting special projects in collaboration with OJJDP. The NMC also works with federal and state agencies as well as other national mentoring organizations to ensure the delivery of high-quality, coordinated youth mentoring services at the community level.

## About the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory

The mission of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) is to improve educational results for children, youth, and adults by providing research and development assistance in delivering equitable, high-quality educational programs.

NWREL works at national levels as well as its primary service area of the Northwest region of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington.

Now in its fourth decade, NWREL reaffirms the belief that strong public schools, strong communities, strong families, and strong children make a strong nation. We further believe that every student must have equal access to high-quality education and the opportunity to succeed, and that strong schools ensure equity and excellence for all students.

## About This Guidebook

The National Mentoring Center has been providing training and technical assistance services to OJJDP-funded Juvenile Mentoring Program (JUMP) grantees and a wide variety of other youth mentoring programs for more than four years. During this time, we have learned a great deal about the specific program components that enable a youth mentoring program to flourish. We have also seen programs struggle when these components are not in place. The program components detailed in this guidebook can serve as the foundation for a mentoring program's success. Most successful programs that we have encountered have these pieces in place.

When these critical components are ignored, we have found mentoring efforts are at risk for program failure. Even worse, much of the new mentoring research indicates that mentoring programs that are poorly designed and implemented may actually do more harm to their youth than if the youth had never participated in the program at all (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002). Laying a solid foundation is vital not only for the long-term success of your program, but also for the safety and well-being of the youth you serve.

This publication was the result of a systematic review of the JUMP program and incorporates findings from the literature related to youth mentoring. It also draws from research on prevention programs, youth development literature, and more general resources on organizational development and nonprofit management.

A working group composed of experts from OJJDP, the NMC, BBBSA, and ITI defined the five foundations for successful mentoring programs and identified the critical components for each foundation area.

Subsequently, a draft version of this guide was developed and peer reviewed by these national experts. This initial version was also disseminated to 65 new JUMP grantees in October 2002. This publication is a revision of the earlier draft.

Obviously, there is a great deal of variety in the design and structure of youth mentoring programs across the United States. Every program is unique in some way and faces its own circumstances. Your program may need to modify some of the components outlined in this guide to meet the specific needs of your program. But keep in mind that the emerging

mentoring research and the experience of successful mentoring programs indicate that these components are predictors of success or failure no matter what the structure of a particular program looks like. Because the ideas detailed in this guide cut across almost all types of mentoring programs, the NMC recommends that programs implement as many of these components as possible to reduce their risk of program failure.

With that in mind, this guidebook is not meant to be the only resource you will ever need or the definitive word on any of the topics covered. Instead, it is meant to give your program a solid understanding of what it takes to build a successful program, with the expectation that you will build on this foundation by continuing to implement new ideas, apply new mentoring research, and refine your program's strategies and services over time. Most of all, this guidebook is designed to be accessible: something more thorough and useful than a simple bulleted list of effective practices, but not the single repository of all mentoring knowledge.

## Audience

This guidebook has two separate, yet overlapping audiences: program administrators and board members, and on-site program coordinators and staff. While certain sections of the guidebook will fall more under one group's authority than others, it is important that both parties be familiar with ALL the components that make a solid foundation for a program. In working with local programs over the years, we have often seen a "disconnect" at the program level between administrators and program staff. For your program to achieve its goals, both the on-site program coordinator and those who oversee the program at a managerial level need to be on the same page. We hope this guidebook will give everyone at your agency a shared understanding of the best practices of a successful program.

## Overview of the Guidebook

The program components discussed in this guide are grouped into five separate, yet interrelated, categories that make up a foundation for programmatic success:

1. Strong Agency Capacity
2. Proven Program Design
3. Effective Community Partnerships
4. Sustainable Resource Development
5. Useful Program Evaluation

Within each of these categories are specific components that we have identified as crucial to program success and stability. For each of these we have provided:

- ◆ **A narrative** explaining why it is important and detailing what your policies and procedures might look like in practice
- ◆ **A list of self-assessment questions** that can help you think about where you are in the process of developing these components
- ◆ **A listing of key resources** that can help you to develop and implement these program components

In the Appendix, we have also provided a **comprehensive checklist** that you can use to gauge the strength of your program's foundation and chart your efforts to improve your program design. We have also included lists of **essential youth mentoring literature** and **NMC publications**, as well as a **timeline for new mentoring programs** that are just getting started in laying this foundation and building their operations.

## How To Use This Guidebook

This guidebook can be used in two ways, depending on the status and needs of your program.

### 1. Structured Program Planning Process

If your program is in the start-up or planning phase, you can use the components recommended in this guide to help structure the development of your program. The self-assessment questions and checklist provided here can help guide you through the processes of laying a solid foundation for your program and designing its policies and procedures.

### 2. Program Audit Tool

If your program is fairly well-established, you can use this guide as a program audit tool. Revisiting each of these components and going through the self-assessment questions and component checklist can give your program a good understanding of what it is doing right and what areas of your operations you may want to revamp.

For those who are just starting out in the mentoring field, it is especially important that you pay close attention to the framework spelled out in this guide. Failure to implement the program components in this guide will only make the development of your program more difficult. This guidebook, combined with the NMC's *Strengthening Mentoring Programs* Training Curriculum and our Technical Assistance Packet series, should provide you with the necessary tools to nurture your program from the start-up phase to being a functioning quality program, one that can help change the lives of youth for years to come.

Programs that are well established and have some record of success can also benefit from this guide. No program is ever designed or implemented perfectly, and it will be useful to compare your current policies, procedures, and practices to what is recommended here. You may find that there are a few holes in your program design or that there is room for improvement in implementing some of the key components we've identified.

One final note on using this guidebook: Many mentoring programs are typically doing amazing things with few resources. We recognize that most program staff are overworked, with little if any time to step back and reflect on program operations and plan for continuous improvement. We also understand that the sheer volume of information contained in this guide can appear quite daunting to the average user.

For these reasons, you may find it helpful to address one foundation area from this guidebook at a time. In this case, we recommend that an agency focus first on the "Proven Program Design" section, as this is the area that will have the most immediate impact on the quality of your mentor/mentee relationships. The other foundation areas will matter little if a mentoring program is failing to create sustained mentor/youth relationships.

We hope that you will use this guide as a tool for analyzing where your program is today and enhancing the services you offer in the future.

# **THE FOUNDATIONS**

1. Strong Agency Capacity
2. Proven Program Design
3. Effective Community Partnerships
4. Sustainable Resource Development
5. Useful Program Evaluation

## Foundation #1: Strong Agency Capacity

This section deals with some of the larger organizational qualities and systems that successful programs have in place. Too often mentoring programs focus on the design and delivery of mentoring services while neglecting the overall support and stability of the agency and the coordinated involvement of key stakeholders. By systematically building a strong agency capacity, supported by written plans, policies, and procedures, your program is more likely to have a shared understanding of the long-term direction of your program. The components found in this section will help you develop the organizational foundation that your program can build on. These components are:

- **Written mission statement and a program development plan**
- **Strong knowledge of mentoring and youth development research**
- **Written policy and procedure manual**
- **Access to training and technical assistance services**
- **Diversity of youth and community being served is reflected in the program**
- **Qualified and trained staff**
- **Evidence of agency support (from board or parent agency)**
- **Community awareness of the program**

***End result:*** If these pieces are in place you can be sure that your agency is strongly positioned to begin offering mentoring services.



## Written Mission Statement and a Program Development Plan

It is important that your mentoring program lay a solid foundation of principles and focused action that will drive everything else that you do. A program whose mission is poorly defined and whose services are not geared to meet specific community needs will struggle to find direction and purpose, with predictable results.

There are several steps a program can take to define its mission and role. The ones outlined here just scratch the surface of this type of organizational development. There is a wide body of organizational development literature available that can supplement the basic process outlined in this section.

### 1. Conduct a Needs Assessment

The first step in creating this kind of direction for your program is to conduct an assessment of your community's needs. Conducting a community needs assessment will inform decisions you make as you plan your program's future. In essence, this assessment documents the challenges and problems facing youth, as well as the existing services available to youth in the community. By comparing the needs of youth with the services currently being provided, your agency will be able to determine the unmet needs that your program can address. This process will give you the "big picture" of what is happening in your community and the role your agency might play.

Sometimes the needs of youth in the community will be readily apparent: widespread gang activity or substance abuse, for example. But even if there are glaring needs, your program should have a good understanding of the many other areas in which youth in the community might need assistance. Some common things programs look at when doing a needs assessment include:

- ◆ School test scores
- ◆ Juvenile crime statistics

- ◆ Dropout rates
- ◆ Teen pregnancy rates
- ◆ Substance abuse estimates
- ◆ Gang activity
- ◆ Existing youth services

The needs assessment should also include the input of community leaders and other youth service agencies. This type of communitywide assessment will help you design a program that fills a real need in your community and whose services will be in demand.

### 2. Develop a Mission Statement and a Vision

Informed by the needs assessment, your mentoring program should next develop a mission statement that drives all programmatic activities, as well as your short- and long-term goals. This mission statement should be carefully crafted and should reflect the diverse voices and needs of all program stakeholders, including the youth and the community you serve. Your mission statement should be fairly short and to the point, yet still answer the question, "Why do we exist?"

#### *Sample Mission Statements:*

From a Big Brothers Big Sisters Agency:

"To improve the lives of young people and enable them to become productive, responsible adults by creating one-to-one mentoring relationships between at-risk children and qualified adult volunteers."

From a federally-funded JUMP program:

"(Program X) is dedicated to the self-empowerment of girls in low-income communities by providing the tools to help them make positive choices to achieve academic success, break the cycles of teen pregnancy and poverty and overcome the barriers of racism and sexism."

*Program Vision*

What will your mission statement look like in practice? What do we hope to achieve with our program? What will our community look like if it is successful? Where do we want to be in five years? These are the types of questions that should be answered when developing a long-term vision for your program. It is important to have long-term goals for your program that influence decisions that are made as the program moves forward. Many programs put these long-range objectives into a vision statement that acts as a compass, ensuring that the program is moving in the right direction over time.

### **3. Create an Advisory Council or Steering Committee**

By soliciting the input of community leaders, youth, parents, school officials, partner organizations, and other stakeholders in the planning process you are ensuring that your program is moving in a direction that will meet the needs of everyone involved. Many programs choose to create an advisory council or steering committee, composed of representatives of the groups mentioned above to help with the planning process. An advisory council is a great way to foster community partnerships while getting the guidance your program needs to better serve the community.

### **4. Plan To Implement the Program**

Now that your mission has been defined, it is time to develop your program plan. Your program plan will help you move from the conceptual phase to the actual delivery of services and beyond. It will also provide you with a blueprint for both your short-term goals and your long-term vision of what you want the program to become. There are several important steps in the program planning process:

#### Self-Assessment Questions

- Has our program conducted a community needs assessment?
- Did the assessment give us a good understanding of the youth in our community and the gaps in services currently being offered to them?
- What information did we learn about our community and youth?
- How has information gathered in the needs assessment been incorporated into our program practices and goals?
- Does our program have a mission statement?
- How do our current program practices mirror the values and goals stated in our mission statement?
- Is our mission statement appropriate for our youth, program partners, and the community in which we are working?
- Has our program implemented a planning process?
- Which stakeholders and community members were involved, or should be involved, in our planning process?
- How often will we review and revise our plan?
- Has our program established clear and achievable goals with measurable outcomes?
- How will our program use the answers to these questions to create a viable long-range plan?

*Develop an implementation plan*

Created by your advisory council or steering committee, your implementation plan is what will take your program from concept to reality. Often this action plan is tied to specific requirements of a funding source, such as a grant or award from a foundation. For other programs it may be entirely up to the steering committee and other partners to determine how to implement the program. Your action plan essentially answers the overarching question: how are we going to do this? Among the questions to consider when developing your implementation plan:

- ◆ What resources can we leverage for the program?
- ◆ What are our needs in terms of building space, staff, and financial resources?
- ◆ What is our timeline for implementing services?
- ◆ Who will design the program?
- ◆ What might our day-to-day operations look like?

*Set goals and evaluation measures*

The next step in the program planning process is to set program goals and evaluation measures. These should be modest goals if your program is just getting started. Often programs shoot for the moon, only to be disappointed when the going gets rough. Don't assume you will have 400 matches after the first six months or expect to eradicate gang activity in the community overnight. Mentoring does work and it is powerful, but setting up a successful program that meets community needs is hard work and you will face challenges. Start with some modest goals, see if you can meet those, and then keep building on your success in pursuit of your overall mission and vision.

Each goal you set should have corresponding measures. Your program should identify measurable indicators that can help you determine your progress toward your goals. Identifying these measures during

the planning process will make conducting an evaluation down the road a much easier task. (See Section 5 of this guide for more detailed information on how to identify these measures.)

*Prepare to review and revise*

Establishing a process and a timeline for reviewing your plan will ensure that your services are relevant and that you continue to meet the needs of the community.

## Key Resources

**Print:**

- Jucovy, L. (2000). *The ABCs of school-based mentoring*. Technical Assistance Packet #1. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- National Assembly of Health and Human Service Organizations. (1997). *The new community collaboration manual*. Washington, DC: Author.
- National Association of Partners in Education. (1992). *Organizing effective school-based mentoring programs*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

**Web:**

- Web of Support Toolkit—<http://www.savethechildren.org/wosokit/pdfs.html>
- National Youth Development Information Center—<http://www.nydic.org/nydic/projects.html>

While developing your mission statement and program plan may appear to be fairly straightforward tasks, they should not be taken lightly. The careful and deliberate effort you put into making sure your program meets community needs and represents community interests will be extremely beneficial down the road. By conducting a needs assessment and developing a solid mission, vision, and program plan, you create a strong base for the delivery of your mentoring services. By laying this foundation, you gain the focused direction needed to run an effective program.

## Strong Knowledge of Mentoring and Youth Development Research

Your program should have a solid understanding of the latest research findings regarding youth mentoring and youth development in general. This research can be very informative in designing and improving your services. Research done by organizations such as Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) and the Search Institute has focused on what makes a mentoring program successful and the expected outcomes for youth that are engaged in a quality mentoring program. Without understanding this research, your program will lack the knowledge to make key decisions in the development of mentoring services. Take the time to learn from the failures and successes of other mentoring programs.

If your program is new, or has experience delivering other types of youth services, but is unfamiliar with the unique challenges and potential of mentoring, your staff will need to get a feel for what mentoring is about and what has been proven to work in the mentoring research.

Among the most important findings to be gleaned from recent mentoring research:

1. *A clear understanding of appropriate roles and responsibilities for mentors.*

It is extremely important that mentors not be placed in a position where they act as social workers, foster parents, or caseworkers. Mentors should not be expected to fill the roles that trained professionals would normally serve. Your organization should clearly define appropriate roles, obligations, and limits for your volunteers, and offer training so that your mentors have a clear understanding of the work they will be doing. The research clearly shows that mentoring relationships are

more likely to fail, and less likely to produce desired outcomes, if mentors are given inappropriate roles or are improperly prepared (Tierney & Grossman, 2000; Sipe, 1996).

2. *The importance of program design and practices.* The body of mentoring research shows that specific programmatic conditions must be met to achieve positive impacts for youth through mentoring. This research stresses the importance of having effective program practices around volunteer screening, matching of volunteers and youth, monitoring and supporting the relationship, closing of particular matches, and a whole host of other program components. The only way to design an effective program is to understand what day-to-day operating procedures have been shown to work (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).
3. *The limitations of mentoring.* As the youth mentoring movement has swelled in popularity, people have come to see mentoring as a panacea, a cure-all for

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program staff have a good understanding of the current research findings related to youth mentoring?
- Have we used mentoring research to guide our program design and day-to-day operations?
- Does our program staff have a good understanding of youth development literature?
- Do we incorporate mentoring and youth development research into the training that mentors receive?
- Are program staff regularly tracking and reviewing new research and literature?

the ills that affect our young people. Unfortunately, the research on the effectiveness of mentoring paints a somewhat different picture. While mentoring can be a very effective support system for a child, the overall impact of mentoring may be less than what it is perceived to be by the public (DuBois, et al., 2002; Rhodes, 2002). Mentoring alone cannot have a positive impact on every child and it cannot overcome every risk factor in a child's life. Programs often get into trouble when they overestimate what their program will be able to achieve based on a poor understanding of the realities of mentoring.

4. *Negative impacts on youth.* It is increasingly clear from the research that youth can be negatively affected by being placed in a poorly designed program or by being matched with a poorly prepared or inappropriate mentor. These youth may be worse off, because of the program's failures, than they would be if they had never been in the program at all. Not only can a program fail to help a child, but it can actually make things worse for the youth if it is poorly designed or managed (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Rhodes, 2002).

For all these reasons, it is important that your program be designed around proven, evidence-based best practices. While this guide is designed to systematically outline the current evidence-based practices, agencies should also review the Elements of Effective Practice, a checklist of best practices developed by the National Mentoring Partnership. In addition, several states have adopted quality assurance standards or standards of effective practice. In some cases mentoring programs must meet these quality assurance standards to be eligible for funding or other support.

In addition to this mentoring-specific research, it is important that your staff has a good understanding

of youth development literature. This will help you understand the youth in your program and the challenges they face, and will help you better prepare your mentors for their match.

A listing of most of the latest research can be found in the "Essential Youth Mentoring Reading" section of the Appendix. Be sure to take an appropriate amount of time to familiarize yourself with these materials—they will help strengthen the services you provide to youth.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Rhodes, J. E. (2002). *Stand by me: The risks and rewards of mentoring today's youth*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- DuBois, D.L., Holloway, B.E., Valentine, J.C., & Cooper, H. (2002). Effectiveness of mentoring programs for youth: A meta-analytic review. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 30*(2), 157-197.
- Jekielek, S., Moore, K.A., & Hair, E.C. (2002). *Mentoring programs and youth development: A synthesis*. Washington, DC: Child Trends.
- Grossman, J.B. (Ed.). (1999). *Contemporary issues in mentoring*. Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

### Web:

- The National Mentoring Partnership's *Elements of Effective Practice*—  
[http://www.mentoring.org/common/effective\\_mentoring\\_practices/effective\\_mentoring\\_practices.adp](http://www.mentoring.org/common/effective_mentoring_practices/effective_mentoring_practices.adp)

## Written Policy and Procedure Manual

One of the most valuable assets to your organization will be your policy and procedure manual. This manual formalizes the decisions you have made regarding how things should be done in your program and provides a blueprint for your day-to-day operations. By creating a policy and procedure manual you are creating a sustainable resource that can guide your program through staff turnover, streamline and improve the delivery and consistency of services, and ensure that your staff, volunteers, and youth have clear expectations and guidance. Your manual should be accessible by all program staff and frequently reviewed and updated to meet program needs.

There are three components that comprise an effective written policy and procedure manual:

### Policies

Policies are defined loosely as the “nonnegotiable” rules of your program. Often, these are formal rules and regulations approved by your board of directors or advisory council. Common focus areas for policies include:

- ◆ Mentor Eligibility
- ◆ Rules of Conduct for Mentors and Mentees
- ◆ Confidentiality
- ◆ Travel
- ◆ Record Keeping
- ◆ Child Abuse Reporting
- ◆ Drugs and Alcohol
- ◆ Sexual Harassment
- ◆ Future Contact Once a Match Ends

### Procedures

Procedures are the step-by-step means by which things get accomplished in your program. They are the engine that drives your services and provide direction for program staff. Most programs have developed clearcut procedures for these common tasks:

- ◆ Conducting Mentor Recruitment Campaigns
- ◆ Mentor/Mentee Intake
- ◆ Conducting Background Checks
- ◆ Training Volunteers
- ◆ Making Matches

## Self-Assessment Questions

- Has our program developed a written policy and procedure manual?
- Does our policy and procedure manual cover all aspects of program operations and provide guidance for handling particular situations that have come up?
- Are our policies approved by our board or advisory council?
- Does our program orient new and current staff to the contents of the policy and procedure manual?
- Is our policy and procedure manual accessible to all staff?
- How often is our policy and procedure manual reviewed and revised?
- How often is this manual used or referred to when staff or clients have questions about the program?

- ◆ Monitoring Matches
- ◆ Volunteer Recognition
- ◆ Grievances
- ◆ Closing/Ending Matches

### **Supporting Documentation**

Many programs also include the following information in their policy and procedure manual to make it a more comprehensive resource:

- ◆ Program History
- ◆ Mission and Vision Statements
- ◆ Organizational Chart
- ◆ Copies of MOUs
- ◆ 501 (c)(3) letter
- ◆ Copies of Brochures, Flyers, etc.

### *Other Program Documentation*

In addition to your program policy and procedure manual, you should organize additional written documentation that supports your program operations. Examples of these supporting documents include lesson plans for all training sessions, marketing and recruitment plans, and evaluation plans and instruments.

Remember that the purpose of developing written policies and procedures is to 1) increase the shared understanding of program operations, 2) minimize the effect of staff turnover, 3) ensure the consistency and quality of program operation, and 4) demonstrate prudent risk management.

## Key Resources

### **Print:**

- Lee, J. (1995). *Generic volunteer orientation manual: Your guide to developing an orientation manual for volunteers*. Corvallis, OR: Essential Press.
- National Mentoring Center. (2003). *Generic mentoring program policy and procedure manual*. Portland, OR: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory.

## Access to Training and Technical Assistance Services

No agency or individual is able to build the perfect youth mentoring program without a little help every now and then. Luckily, there are places to turn for assistance in designing and implementing your program.

Many local, state, and national mentoring organizations provide training, technical assistance, publications, data collection, recruitment assistance, and networking opportunities for you and your staff. Many of these organizations, including the National Mentoring Center, provide phone and e-mail consultation and materials free of charge and offer inexpensive training opportunities.

At the state and regional levels, much of this support is provided by state or local mentoring partnerships and initiatives. Twenty-three states and 15 urban centers around the country have formal partnerships in place. While the level of service and support varies among these entities, chances are that they can act as a guiding influence on the work of your program. Almost all these partnerships help with staff development and mentor recruitment to some degree, and

can act as a support system that keeps your program from going it alone.

In addition to seeking out this higher-end training and assistance, there are many e-mail discussion groups (listservs) and Web-based message boards related to mentoring, youth development, and non-profit management that your staff can join. These discussion groups are excellent sources of information and provide great opportunities for peer-to-peer networking.

Many programs also build in-house resource collections featuring mentoring research, how-to guides, and youth development literature. Such a collection can be invaluable in improving your program's operating procedures and in designing mentor training. A resource collection keeps the knowledge of mentoring experts at your fingertips even when you cannot take the time to attend training events and conferences.

By learning about and taking advantage of the expertise of training and technical assistance

### Self-Assessment Questions

- What training and technical assistance is available to our program's staff, administrators, board members, and volunteers?
- Have we identified the local, state, and national mentoring organizations that may be able to provide assistance to our program?
- Have we identified areas of our program that we might need assistance in improving? If so, what are they?
- Does our program have a "resource collection" that contains research, publications, relevant literature, and contact information for organizations that can offer us assistance?
- Does our program encourage program coordinators and other staff to network with other mentoring professionals or assistance providers as a part of ongoing professional development?

organizations, you save yourself time, money, and energy that is better spent on direct service to your mentors and mentees. Make sure that your staff is given the opportunity to take advantage of training and other forms of assistance. Making professional development a routine activity gives your program a more knowledgeable and effective staff.

## Key Resources

### Web:

- NMC's MentorExchange Listserv—  
<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/listserv.html>
- State Mentoring Partnership/Initiative Web Sites—[http://www.mentoring.org/state\\_partnerships/state\\_local\\_profiles.adp](http://www.mentoring.org/state_partnerships/state_local_profiles.adp)
- Evaluation, Management, and Training (EMT)— <http://www.emt.org>
- Local United Way Agencies—  
<http://national.unitedway.org/myuw/>

## Diversity of the Youth and Community Being Served Is Reflected in the Program

Your program has a responsibility to represent the diverse youth and volunteers found in both your program and the community you serve. By increasing the diversity of your program staff, board members, funding sources, and volunteer base, you better prepare yourself to meet the specific needs of different cultures and populations of youth. You are also better positioned to respond to community needs, build partnerships, seize funding opportunities, and position yourself as a “bridge-building” agency within your community.

### *Internal documents*

Your program should examine the cultural appropriateness of language used in your mission statement, nondiscrimination employment policies, and affirmative action plan, and include culturally appropriate references in the text of your policies and procedures. The key question for all program documentation is: Are we welcoming and inclusive? By developing inclusive policies, procedures, and program resources, you build the foundation for a program that welcomes and invites people from all walks of life.

### *External documents*

Be sure that your marketing efforts reflect this diversity as well. Pay close attention to the language and images in your public service announcements, recruitment materials, Web site, and any presentations your organization gives. Are these materials welcoming to all? Are they sending the right message?

### *Program staff and volunteers*

While it may be challenging to accomplish, your staff and volunteers should represent the diversity found in the community. If your staff or volunteers do not adequately represent the diversity of your community it is important that your agency provide opportunities for staff to develop cultural competency related to the youth you serve and the commu-

nity as a whole. This can be accomplished in part by inviting representatives from cultural groups in the community to lead staff development activities and recommend literature and other readings that can improve your staff’s cultural understanding and sensitivity.

### Self-Assessment Questions

- How does our organization value diversity?
- Does our program have nondiscrimination hiring policies and practices?
- Do our mission and vision statements contain specific language that either reflects our diversity or might alienate or offend specific groups?
- Do our staffing and volunteer patterns reflect the diversity in the youth we work with and our community as a whole?
- Do we have a process in place to ensure that our staff has sufficient cultural competency?
- How diverse is our board or advisory committee?
- What ways can our recruitment efforts and community involvement be enhanced by increasing and utilizing the diversity of our organization?
- Is our program aware of diversity in all forms of communication generated by our program (application forms, recruitment materials, brochures, Web site, training materials, PSAs, etc.)?

This is not to say that a program that is focused on matching African-American mentors with African-American youth can't make that focus prominent. Or that a program geared toward getting girls interested in science careers can't market itself toward that goal. Your goal is to try not to alienate other cultural groups in the community. You will open more doors and gain more respect in the community you serve by being truly representative of the diversity around you.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. (1994). *Pass it on: Volunteer recruitment manual. Outreach to African-American, Latino/a and other diverse populations*. Philadelphia, PA: Author.
- "Looking Outward, Looking Inward" in National Mentoring Center's Bulletin #10—  
<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/bull10.pdf>

## Qualified and Trained Staff

Of the many resources that will make your program successful, your own staff should be considered one of the most important. These are the people that interact daily with the volunteers, youth, parents, teachers, and community members. They are also the individuals who recruit volunteers and mentees, train and support mentors, and act as the “face” of the organization. By carefully selecting, training, and investing in these individuals, your program is building a foundation for a strong, consistent, and sustained program. Keep in mind that one of the biggest factors in the failure of mentoring programs is staff turnover. Your program will need to do all it can to find and keep a quality staff. Ultimately, these individuals are the ones who will determine whether you achieve your program goals.

Your agency should have written job descriptions for all staff members, including minimum qualifications for knowledge, skills, and experience for each position. A strong background and experience in youth work, volunteer management, and community organization are critical skills for key staff in your program.

Your program should offer an orientation for new staff that includes an introduction to the program’s mission and goals, an explanation of any grant or funding obligations, and a review of your policy and procedure manual. The program coordinator, specifically, should have extensive knowledge of (or receive extensive training in) best practices in youth mentoring and program development. You should also create an ongoing staff development plan, which includes opportunities for networking with other professionals in the mentoring and volunteer management fields, continued training, and reflection activities.

Your program should be highly proactive in its approaches to hiring, training, and supporting staff members. A proactive strategy should include:

### Effective Staff Recruitment Strategies

Your recruitment efforts should create the largest pool of qualified applicants from which to choose. Diversify your recruitment strategy to possibly include:

- ◆ Print ads
- ◆ Listservs and Web pages
- ◆ Radio/TV
- ◆ University bulletin boards
- ◆ Community centers
- ◆ Networking with other local agencies and partners
- ◆ Networking with state mentoring programs

Be aware that finding qualified staff can be one of the payoffs for having a strong reputation in your community. If people know that the work that you are doing can, and does, make a difference, they will more likely want to be part of your efforts—either as part of your staff or as a volunteer.

### Effective Staff Screening

Staff screening should be thorough and detailed to ensure that the selected individual matches the criteria specified in your job descriptions regarding knowledge, skills, and experience. As noted earlier, key staff should have previous youth service and volunteer management experience, preferably with a mentoring program, as well as experience in community organization and building community partnerships. Do not settle for a less qualified candidate simply to fill the position—this can cause more long-term harm than good. Be sure that the individual is a good “fit” with your program and will be able to fill the many difficult and time-consuming responsibilities of the position. Also, consider your program’s commitment to a diverse work environment and how representative your organization is of the community you serve when selecting staff.

## Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have written job descriptions for all positions, which include minimum qualifications for knowledge, skills, and experience?
- Does our program require program coordinators to have a background in youth development work, volunteer management, and/or youth mentoring?
- Do we diversify our job announcements in order to receive the largest possible applicant pool of qualified candidates?
- What is our process for screening qualified candidates to ensure that they are a good match for our program?
- Do we screen staff members as part of our risk management strategy?
- Are we properly preparing new staff members for their roles?
- What ongoing professional development opportunities does our program make available to staff, including networking, ongoing training, and reflection?
- Has our program experienced staff turnover that has affected the quality of services in the past?
- If so, have we implemented support systems in an effort to minimize future turnover?

Since your staff will also be having contact with youth, you will need to screen applicants from a risk management perspective as well. Staff should be subject to the same background checks and other safety measures taken with volunteers in your program.

### Effective Support Systems for Staff

Many mentoring programs, especially programs in the “start-up” phase, are prone to high rates of turnover at the program coordinator and other key positions. It can be difficult for smaller nonprofits, such as mentoring programs, to offer competitive salaries. Youth service workers can also simply get “burned out” by the demands and stresses of setting up a program and managing day-to-day operations.

These staffing losses can severely disrupt the support and supervision of mentoring relationships, which ultimately harms the sense of trust your volunteers

and youth feel toward your program. The consistent services to youth that your program desires can only occur through consistent staffing patterns. To minimize the damage that can come from turnover, it is important that your agency lets staff know that it is committed to them, and that their contributions are valued and supported.

An agency should plan ahead to help position new staff for success from the first day of employment. New employees should receive an orientation to your program, including applicable skills training and professional development planning. New staff should also receive a copy of your program’s policy and procedure manual and become familiar with the mentoring program’s expectations. Be sure to “check in” frequently with program coordinators and other key staff, possibly setting aside weekly meeting times to discuss the program and challenges that have

come up, and to gather ideas and suggestions new employees may have for improving your services. By taking the time to listen and communicate, you let your staff know that you care about what they are doing and that you are there to advocate for them. As a program manager or administrator, this investment will ultimately build trust and a stronger, more effective program.

Be sure to provide ongoing opportunities for professional development and networking so that program staff can continue to grow in their positions and provide better services over time. You may not be able to offer high salaries, but creating a positive work environment where staff can learn and be supported will minimize the turnover that cripples so many programs.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Davis, N.S., Grosso, K.L., & American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. (1998). *Guidelines for the screening of persons working with children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities in need of support*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Nonprofit Risk Management Center. (1998). *Staff screening toolkit: Building a strong foundation through careful staffing*, 2nd ed. Washington, DC: Author.

### Web:

- Management Assistance Program's Free, On-Line Guide to Staffing—  
<http://www.mapnp.org/library/staffing/staffing.htm>

## Evidence of Agency Support From Board or Parent Agency

One of the basic premises of nonprofit organizational design and management is that individual programs are only as strong as the demonstrated agency and agency board support they receive. In other words, if your agency and board are not actively committed to your mentoring efforts, your program is at risk for failure.

For many agencies, the youth mentoring program defines the agency. For example, a Big Brothers Big Sisters agency only provides mentoring services. In these cases, the agency exists to support the mentoring program. However, there are an increasing number of broader youth development organizations, schools, and other government agencies that are incorporating youth mentoring into a range of services for youth. In this circumstance, support of the agency and board must be cultivated.

Mentoring projects in these larger organizational settings can potentially be lost in the confusion of a broad scope of work and multiple priorities. Unfortunately, in some cases, parent organizations view mentoring projects as simply an additional funding opportunity, without having the knowledge, desire, or ability to effectively implement a quality program. Without demonstrated ongoing commitment from the parent agency's management and board, mentoring programs will struggle.

### Board Involvement

The biggest factor in getting the organizational support your program needs is the involvement

and engagement of the agency's board of directors. It is important that your program be given the opportunity to communicate regularly with the board. The board needs to be informed as to the progress, challenges, and successes of your program. They must take an active role in your program by reviewing (even creating and approving) your mentoring program's policies and procedures, assisting in resource development planning, and being involved in your efforts to create community partnerships and awareness. Too often boards are seen as being disconnected from the mentoring program itself. For your program to be successful, your program must establish a relationship and pattern of communication with your agency's board that makes them want to support, develop, and advocate your mentoring efforts.

### Self-Assessment Questions

- How closely does our mentoring program fit with the mission/goals of the larger organization?
- How frequently does the program staff communicate with senior management of the organization and the board?
- Do mentoring program staff have decisionmaking roles within the larger organization?
- Is our mentoring program permanently written into all agency-planning documents and noted in the agency organizational chart?
- Does our mentoring program receive appropriate space, equipment, management oversight, and secretarial/fiscal support from our parent agency?
- Is our board of directors involved with and informed about our program?
- What can our program do to address any gaps in agency support?

**Agency Investment**

In addition to board support, the strong investment of the organization's management is essential for your program to succeed. The agency should help mentoring program staff understand the role of the program in the overall goals and objectives of the agency, and incorporate the program into the agency's management structure, resource planning, and marketing/development activities. At the basic level, this also means supplying equipment, committing secretarial and fiscal management support as needed, providing adequate office space and supplies, and engaging in frequent, ongoing communication. These actions demonstrate that the program is a welcome and integral facet of the overarching agency mission and goals.

**Key Resources****Print:**

- Bolman, L.G., & Deal, T.E. (2003). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice, and leadership*, 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Lakey, B.M. (2000). *Nonprofit governance: Steering your organization with authority and accountability*. Washington, DC: BoardSource.

## Community Awareness of the Mentoring Program

Building strong, positive community awareness of your program is the end result of all your previous efforts toward building strong agency capacity. If you have involved the right stakeholders, if you are working toward a focused vision, if you are appropriately diverse, and if your program is properly staffed and supported, then you will have a good reputation in the community. When people think about youth mentoring, they will think of your program. Finding that kind of community awareness and support is vital to any program's long-term success.

What is your program's reputation in the community? What do people know about your efforts? What distinguishes the work you are doing from other programs? By examining these questions, you can learn a great deal about:

- ◆ How likely people are to want to volunteer with your program
- ◆ The strengths and selling points that your organization has in marketing itself

- ◆ The potential that you have to collaborate and partner with other agencies in your area

### Identifying Potential Awareness Strategies

Developing an intentional community awareness plan will help your agency create name recognition and program support that will make volunteer recruitment and resource development easier over time. There are many methods of creating this community awareness, and having an organized plan will help focus these outreach efforts.

Examples of awareness-building activities include:

- ◆ Newsletters to program partners and community members
- ◆ Public service announcements
- ◆ Outreach to local media
- ◆ Having a presence at community events
- ◆ Flyers and posters
- ◆ Serving on the boards of other local youth service organizations

### Self-Assessment Questions

- What is our program's reputation in the community?
- How are we assessing the community's perceptions of our program (focus groups, community surveys, etc.)?
- What type of media and community outreach are we, or should we be, engaged in?
- Have we identified the strengths and selling points of our organization?
- How can we improve the marketing of our agency?
- What resources in our community are available to help us communicate our message and promote our program?
- Is there anything that our program is particularly known for? What is our "niche"?
- How are our fundraising, partnerships, and volunteer recruitment connected to our community involvement strategies?

Be engaged with the community even when your program is not involved in a volunteer recruitment campaign. While *you* may know what a fantastic program you are running, think of how being prominently involved in the community can bring in additional resources such as volunteers, grants, and community advocates. By sharing your program's success stories and communicating openly with program partners and community members, you build awareness of your efforts and gain key name recognition.

### **Branding Your Program**

Be sure to develop a “brand” for your program—a logo, color scheme, and descriptive language that makes your program easily identifiable. This program brand should be used on everything that goes out from your organization—flyers, business cards, letterhead, e-mails, Web site, media ads—so that you create a consistent visual and verbal association in the mind of your community.

## Key Resources

### **Print:**

- National Mentoring Center. (2000). *Strengthening Mentoring Programs Training Curriculum*. Modules #3: Marketing and Fundraising & #4: Forming and Maintaining Community Partnerships. Portland, OR: NWREL

### **Web:**

- From the Evaluation Management and Training Web site: Sustaining Program Viability— <http://www.emt.org/userfiles/SustainingViability.pdf>  
Going to Market: Marketing Concepts for Mentoring Programs— <http://www.emt.org/userfiles/GoingMarket.pdf>

## Foundation #2: Proven Program Design

In this section you will find the evidence-based best practices for developing your program's operating procedures and implementing your mentoring services. These are the components that will make up the structure of your day-to-day operations. The program design components we've identified as being critical are:

- **Written recruitment plan with multiple strategies**
- **Initial orientation for prospective mentors and mentees**
- **Established mentor/mentee intake procedures**
- **Appropriate mentor screening procedures**
- **Pre-match training for all new mentors and mentees**
- **Established matching procedure**
- **Established procedure for monitoring matches**
- **Support, ongoing training, and recognition for volunteers**
- **Established match closure procedure**
- **Stable and appropriate number of matches with a high retention rate**

***End result:*** By implementing these program design components, you are ensuring that your program is safe, and that you are creating quality, effective matches between volunteers and youth.

## Written Recruitment Plan With Multiple Strategies

The first step in creating high-quality mentoring relationships is finding appropriate and suitable adults who are committed to volunteering with your program. The more developed, structured, and targeted your recruitment strategies are, the more likely you are to find the most appropriate match for each youth in your program.

Because of the importance of finding qualified mentors, your recruitment efforts cannot be conducted haphazardly. You must systematically target groups of prospective mentors with a message that they can relate to and understand. This message must be articulated clearly and tailored for the specific populations of volunteers that you are hoping to attract to your program. Your targeted recruitment messages should attract the different groups of mentors that are needed to address the needs of youth within your program. These targeted messages should find their way into your print materials, newspaper and media ads, flyers, and brochures. And if your program makes presentations and appearances at public events, you will need to make sure that your message is reflective of the audience you are trying to recruit.

There are several steps in creating an effective recruitment plan:

### 1. Adequately Staff Your Recruitment Efforts

The first step is to designate staff who are responsible for developing and implementing your volunteer recruitment efforts. Recruitment can be a labor-intensive task, so be sure that your staff has the necessary time available to give recruitment the attention it deserves. In addition to adequate time, be sure that the people responsible for your recruitment efforts have the proper knowledge and skills to be successful. You may need to seek out training or other professional development activities to ensure that your recruitment personnel have a good understanding of effective recruitment strategies.

### 2. Identify Your Target Groups and Volunteer-Rich Environments

Your program will need to identify the types of individuals you will want to seek out and the volunteer-rich environments in which you might find them. The specific populations your program chooses to target will vary, depending on your program's mission, goals, and clients. The key is to identify the groups in your community that might supply the type of mentors that would work well in your program. If your program has conducted a community needs assessment, chances are you have a pretty good understanding of the demographic make-up of the groups in your community and an awareness of volunteer pools on which to focus.

Common volunteer groups that programs target include:

- ◆ College students
- ◆ Senior citizens
- ◆ Specific groups related to gender, race, ethnicity, or culture
- ◆ Employees in a specific field
- ◆ Individuals from a particular geographic area

Just as it is important to identify potential groups of volunteers for your program, you must also identify local organizations, workplaces, and other community settings that might have large numbers of potential volunteers. These volunteer-rich environments can greatly assist you in recruiting from your target groups. By developing contacts with these organizations, you can create partnerships that support your recruitment efforts. Some have likened recruitment in these volunteer-rich environments to a “wholesale” (large quantity) rather than “retail” (traditional one-to-one recruitment of individuals) approach to finding volunteers.

Common volunteer-rich environments include:

- ◆ Local colleges and universities (or specific campus groups such as fraternities and sororities)
- ◆ Retirement homes
- ◆ Social, civic, and fraternal organizations
- ◆ Local businesses
- ◆ Local/regional government agencies
- ◆ Faith-based organizations
- ◆ Professional associations

Your program should keep a written list of general targeted groups and specific volunteer-rich environments on which you focus your recruitment efforts. You should take time to periodically update, expand,

and refine this list so that your recruitment efforts are flexible and can expand in the future.

### **3. Customize Your Recruitment Messages**

Once you have identified the groups your program would like to target, you should begin the process of tailoring your message to appeal to those groups. Recognize that mentoring will appeal to different groups of adults for different reasons. Each group will likely have some unique motivational appeals that should be considered in designing your recruitment messages. You cannot use the same approach for every group of prospective mentors and expect consistent results.

## Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have a written recruitment plan that includes goals for recruitment, timeline of scheduled activities, program staff responsible for implementing activities, and a budget for recruitment efforts?
- Does our program have a written volunteer "job description" that includes responsibilities, requirements, and benefits of mentoring?
- What is the message that "sells" our organization to potential mentors?
- How does our organization tailor its message to specific groups of prospective volunteers?
- Do we diversify our recruitment strategies to "target" different populations of prospective mentors?
- How do we integrate local networks and other community organizations into our recruitment plans?
- How does our program utilize its name recognition in its recruitment efforts?
- How does our organization utilize customer service principles in making the recruitment process comfortable and easy for potential volunteers?
- What types of recruitment materials does our program use?
- Do we utilize the diversity of our staff, current volunteers, and board members to our advantage in recruiting mentors?

This does not mean that the mission, goals, or volunteer responsibilities of your program change depending on which group you're courting. It simply means that you spend some time thinking about what aspects of your program might appeal to, say, college students more than would apply to a local church group. What would you highlight about your program if you were approaching a local high-tech firm that would be different if you were approaching an Elk's Lodge? Your program's goals and focus should not change, but the message for your various target groups will.

#### **4. Develop Your Recruitment Strategies**

Once you know who you are targeting, where you might find them, and what you want to say to them, it's time to develop some methods of delivery for your recruitment message. There are many vehicles for getting your recruitment message out to your targeted groups. Some of the most common are:

- ◆ *Program Brochures and Flyers*

Your program should have brochures, posters, newsletters, flyers, and other print materials that you can give to prospective mentors and disseminate at community events. These print materials should explain the mission and goals of the program and contain motivational language that would inspire someone to further explore volunteering in your program.

- ◆ *A Mentor "Job Description"*

Be sure to have a well-defined written job description for mentors that describes the roles, responsibilities, and benefits of mentoring as a volunteer with your organization. This description should tie in closely with your program's mission and goals and the population of youth you are serving.

- ◆ *Newspaper and Media Advertising*

Your program should explore the possibility of reaching out to targeted groups through print ads or through public service announcements. This type of outreach can often be done more inexpensively than one might expect, often in the form of in-kind donations. Your program may also consider writing a letter to the editor or submitting press releases to local papers about the program's progress.

- ◆ *Program Web Site*

Having an effective program Web site is fast becoming a necessity, not a luxury. Having a presence on the Web can really expand your program's visibility, even at the local level. Once your Web site is up, be sure to get it listed on other Web sites that help with volunteer recruitment (such as Network for Good or your state's mentoring partnership Web site).

- ◆ *Presentations*

Your program should regularly be making recruitment presentations to local businesses and organizations. It is important to have a dynamic presenter represent your agency—someone who can engage an audience and inspire passion about the work your program does. It also helps to bring along an experienced and enthusiastic current mentor to share his or her story. Some programs use these presentations as a volunteer orientation, while other simply use them as an introduction to the program that is followed by a later orientation for those who have expressed interest in the program.

◆ *Displays at Events*

Whenever possible, your program should have a booth or table at community events where appropriate groups of mentors might be found. It is important to be visible in the community and increase general awareness of your program.

◆ *“Word of Mouth”*

One of the best ways of attracting new volunteers is through your existing pool of mentors. Ask your mentors to provide personal testimony and help in recruiting friends, co-workers, and family members. “Word of mouth” advertising is your reward for running a quality program. If your program is well regarded in the community, and if your volunteers are happy, then people will have positive things to say about your program. That kind of positive reputation can go a long way in helping all aspects of your recruitment process.

No matter what methods you use in recruiting volunteers, it is important to create a “customer-friendly” atmosphere. You should designate staff members to follow up volunteer inquiries in a timely and professional manner. Your printed materials should describe the steps in the process of becoming a mentor, so that people know what they’re getting into. Most important, your program should be perceived as being welcoming, attentive, and supportive.

By taking the time to present your program as something special, something worth being involved in, and by being engaged with the targeted groups you are recruiting, you are laying the foundation for creating successful matches down the road.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. (1994). *Pass it on: Volunteer recruitment manual. Outreach to African-American, Latino/a and other diverse populations*. Philadelphia, PA: Author.
- Ellis, S. (1996). *The volunteer recruitment (and membership development) book*, 2nd ed. Philadelphia, PA: Energize, Inc.
- Jucovy, L. (2000). *The ABCs of school-based mentoring*. Technical Assistance Packet #1. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Recruiting mentors: A guide to finding volunteers to work with youth*. Technical Assistance Packet #3. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- National Mentoring Center. (2000). *Strengthening Mentoring Programs Training Curriculum, Module #1: Targeted Mentor Recruitment*. Portland, OR: NWREL

### Note: Referral/Recruitment of Youth

Many programs do not do much active recruitment of youth to the program due to formal partnerships with schools and youth service agencies in which youth are referred to the program rather than recruited as individuals. If your program does not have a system for referring youth directly to your program, you will need to go through the steps outlined above from a youth perspective. You will need to identify the types of youth you want to target, where you might be able to reach them, and create custom recruitment messages and delivery methods that will lead to their involvement in your program.

## Initial Orientation for Prospective Mentors and Mentees

One of the most important first impressions that you set for potential program participants occurs during your initial orientation sessions. It is very important to create well-organized, goal-driven, and accessible orientations for all potential mentors and mentees. This orientation may take place during an initial recruitment presentation or act as a follow-up for interested individuals, but it should always take place before the volunteer application and screening process begins. By giving prospective participants a thorough overview of what your program is about and what your volunteers' responsibilities are, you are ensuring that the majority of your applicants clearly understand the expectations related to being a mentor. Communicating these expectations is the first step in building a committed and informed volunteer base, and the initial orientation is an ideal point to

start laying out those expectations.

Your orientation sessions should include information about the history, goals, policies, procedures, values, and culture of your program. Potential participants should walk away from this orientation with a clear understanding of what the qualifications are to be a mentor or mentee in your program, and the positive outcomes of participating in the program. Your orientation should be a natural extension of any previous recruitment messages, and set the stage for participants to learn about the next steps in your application, screening, and selection process. Be sure to provide print materials that all orientation participants can take with them and have applications available for those who are interested.

Your orientation is not optional, but is an integral part of your recruitment, screening, and matching processes. In addition to providing potential participants with information about your program, orientations provide you with a wonderful opportunity to

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Has our program developed an initial orientation for prospective mentors and mentees?
- Does the orientation convey the mission, history, goals, and positive outcomes of our program?
- Does the orientation clearly outline the responsibilities, qualifications, and rules for participating in the program?
- Does it explain the next steps in the application/screening/training/matching process?
- Does it "sell" the program by explaining the benefits of participation for both the youth and volunteers?
- Does the content of the orientation fit in with our recruitment, screening, and matching procedure?
- What does our program learn about prospective participants during the orientation sessions and what is done with that information?

gather information about your potential mentors and mentees. This information can give you great insight into their suitability for your program, and may provide specific knowledge about the volunteer that you can use later when making matches.

If done properly, an initial orientation can be the “hook” that takes someone from being simply interested in the program to actually becoming a mentor. Staff should follow up with orientation participants at a later date to see if they have further questions or concerns about the program and if they are interested in volunteering.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Bowman, R.P., & Bowman, S.C. (1997). *Co-piloting: A systematic mentoring program for reaching and encouraging young people*. Chapin, SC: YouthLight.
- Lee, J. (1995). *Generic volunteer orientation manual: Your guide to developing an operation manual for volunteers*. Corvallis, OR: Essential Press.
- National Mentoring Working Group. (1991b). *Mentor training curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America.

## Established Mentor/Mentee Intake Procedures

It is important that your program develops and implements standardized mentor and mentee intake procedures. These procedures should detail the step-by-step process that takes an individual from being an applicant to a program participant.

Some of the key elements of your intake procedures will be:

- ◆ A timeline for responding to inquiries and referrals
- ◆ Participation in a program orientation
- ◆ Completion of a written application
- ◆ Conducting criminal background checks and other screening protocols
- ◆ Checking of personal and professional references
- ◆ Conducting face-to-face interviews
- ◆ Obtaining parental permission (in the case of mentees)
- ◆ Matching of volunteers and youth
- ◆ Conducting an initial meeting between the match
- ◆ Creation of case files

Many of the steps in these intake procedures will be discussed later in this guidebook. But it is important

to view the establishment of these procedures as a separate activity from actually conducting the procedure. Your program may be doing screening and matching, but if it is being done in a haphazard, inconsistent manner, chances are that your program is struggling to increase your volunteer base and make effective matches.

Having established, concrete intake procedures streamlines the entire process. These procedures should establish a timeline for getting someone from applicant to participant. With identifiable steps you can easily tell where individuals are on the road to becoming a mentor or mentee and your volunteers and youth will have a better understanding of the process. Without established procedures potential volunteers may fall through the cracks as your staff loses track of individuals at various points in the process. These procedures also ensure a consistency of services, which is valuable from a customer service perspective, but is also crucial from a risk management point of view. A program that is conducting their intake and matching in a random, case-by-case manner is much more vulnerable to breakdowns in the screening process that can compromise the safety of your youth and have potentially disastrous consequences.

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have established mentor and mentee intake procedures?
- What are the steps we have deemed necessary for participation in the program?
- Are these steps in alignment with our program's policies?
- Is this written procedure included in our policy and procedure manual?
- How do we track the progress of volunteers and youth through the steps of the procedure?
- Is our procedure adequate from a customer service perspective? A risk management perspective?

Establishing these procedures keeps your staff organized and ensures that everyone who participates in your program has gone through the steps you have deemed necessary in your policy and procedure manual. In essence, they bring order to what is often a chaotic aspect of a program's operations.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Arevalo, E., & Cooper, B. (2002). *Running a safe and effective mentoring program*. Los Altos, CA: Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute.
- National Mentoring Center. (2003) *Generic mentoring program policy and procedure manual*. Portland, OR: NWREL

## Appropriate Mentor Screening Procedures

One of your program's biggest responsibilities is to adequately screen your pool of mentor applicants to ensure they are both safe and suitable for the young people in your program. Screening is an absolutely essential part of risk management for your program. Not only do you need to ensure the safety of all the youth you are serving, but you need to ensure the viability of your program as well. Just one incident of abuse or mistreatment of a youth in your program will not only be severely detrimental to the youth you serve, but may destroy everything your program has worked to achieve.

Screening should not just be looked at as a liability and risk management tool. It should also be viewed as a crucial method of ensuring that your mentors are appropriate for your program in terms of their level of commitment and having the necessary traits to be an effective mentor. Thus, the screening process has two major goals: **safety of the youth** and determining the **suitability of mentors**.

The first components of your screening process are your mentor "job description" and your mentor eligibility policy. The job description should outline the mentor's responsibilities and obligations, eligibility requirements for becoming a mentor (such as minimum age, time requirements, no history of criminal activity, etc.), and the benefits of being a mentor. Your mentor eligibility policy should clearly detail what characteristics would either qualify or disqualify someone from participating in your program. These two documents act as the initial filter for applicants by clearly spelling out who will and will not be accepted into the program. Individuals who are either ineligible or who cannot meet the requirements of the job description are screened out early in the screening process, saving the time of both the staff and volunteer.

For volunteers who meet the requirements of the job description, programs need to employ several additional levels of screening. These may include but are not limited to:

- ◆ A written application
- ◆ A face-to-face interview
- ◆ Written personal references that are verified by staff
- ◆ A reference from their employer
- ◆ A criminal records check
- ◆ A child abuse registry check
- ◆ A driving record check
- ◆ An in-home visit and assessment

These screening tools address the issues of safety and suitability mentioned earlier. Employing several of these tools not only ensures that the volunteer is safe and trustworthy, but it also allows staff to learn a great deal about the personal traits and interests of the volunteer that can be used in making an appropriate match with a youth.

You will need to decide what the appropriate level of screening is for your type of program. The written application, a face-to-face interview, reference checks, and a criminal background check are employed almost universally by youth mentoring programs. **These four screening tools represent the baseline, the minimum screening procedure, for running a safe program** that produces safe and appropriate mentor/youth matches. Whether you choose to employ such additional screening measures as driving records checks and home visits will depend on your program setting and the level of supervision between the mentor and youth.

For example, if you have a community-based mentoring program where the mentor will be transporting youth in a car, you may determine that a driver's license record check and proof of auto insurance are important screening tools.

Let's look at the four basic screening tools more closely:

### **Written Application**

This application should be very similar to a job application in terms of personal and reference information gathered. You will also want to ask the applicant to divulge any criminal history, motivations for wanting to be a mentor, interests and hobbies, any special skills they could bring to a

mentoring relationship, and the type of youth with whom they would like to be matched. Most mentor applications also contain a consent form, asking the applicants to state that they understand the obligations detailed in the mentor job description, that they will adhere to the program's policies and procedures, and that they grant permission for the agency to conduct a criminal background check or other components of the screening procedure.

## Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have a detailed, written screening procedure?
- Is our screening procedure appropriate for our type of mentoring program?
- Do we have a thorough understanding of our legal liability and responsibilities?
- Does our screening procedure look at the mentor's suitability as well as safety concerns?
- Does our program have a written policy on who we will accept or reject as a volunteer?
- If so, is our screening procedure in accordance with that policy?
- What are the tools/steps we use in our screening process?
- Does our program have a written mentor job description?
- Do we conduct face-to-face interviews with volunteers?
- Is our staff properly trained in how to conduct interviews and assess the information gathered?
- What questions do we ask during interviews? Have we standardized the interview in a written document?
- What references do we ask for and what types of information do we hope to collect from applicants?
- What parts of our screening process allow us to gauge an applicant's dependability, motivations, and suitability?
- Does our program understand our state's process for conducting background checks?
- Have we developed a list of disqualifying criminal offenses based on our eligibility policy, as well as potential mitigating circumstances for those transgressions not covered by the policy?
- Who makes the final decision on acceptance or rejection?
- Do we have a process for notifying a volunteer who has not been accepted into the program?

It should also state that the applicant certifies that all of the information given on the form is factual and complete. Falsification of information or significant omissions should result in the denial of the application or, if the applicant has already been placed, revocation of the placement. Be sure to tailor your application to your specific program needs so that it collects all of the initial applicant information you require.

### **Face-to-Face Interview**

Your program will need to develop a standard written interview guide and a set of questions that staff can use during interviewing. Having a written guide and a standard set of questions will ensure a consistent level of screening no matter who does the interviewing. The interview should add greater depth and understanding to the information gathered on the application. For instance, if an applicant writes that he wants to be a mentor because he “likes helping children,” the interview is the time to figure out what he means by that. The interview is the best time for a program to really learn about an applicant’s personality, history, and motivations, so the interview questions should be tailored to reflect those areas.

Staff should be trained in effective interviewing techniques. It is important that they can interview applicants with a sense of compassion while also having the ability to ask tough questions and spot potential “red flags.” The interview is not the time to be selling the program or getting the applicant “hooked.” It is the time to spot potential problems and learn all you can about this person who wants to become a mentor.

The interview should also provide the applicant with a chance to ask questions about your program and the next steps in the mentoring procedure, as well as an opportunity for your staff to discuss any potential eligibility concerns with the applicant.

### **Reference Checks**

Your program should decide which types of references would give you the necessary insight into the applicant. Employers, relatives, friends, and co-workers are all potential references that you may wish to check.

Each program needs to decide how it will contact references (mail, phone, e-mail) and what information it is looking for (verification of information on the written application, endorsements of the applicant, etc.). Once again, be sure to make the method of contact and the questions asked reflect your screening objectives.

### **Criminal Background Checks**

The process for conducting criminal background checks of volunteers varies from state to state. Your program will need to contact your state’s criminal history records repository to determine what the process is for conducting these record checks. Your mentoring program may wish to consider using a private vendor to conduct criminal history record checks. Some screening companies have specially designed services aimed at nonprofit volunteers.

If your program has never screened volunteers or conducted background checks, it might be useful to get some peer assistance in designing your screening procedures. If there are other

## Addendum

### *Screening Level Based on Program Design*

Mentoring Program Category	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5
Focus	Relationship	Relationship	Relationship	Academics	Academics
Mentoring relationship	One-to-one	Team	One-to-one	One-to-one	Team
Minimum length of commitment	One year	One year	One year	Academic year	Academic year
Minimum hours per month	10	10	4	4	4
Do meetings take place at a designated location?	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Supervision	Low*	Low*	Medium**	Medium**	High***

\*Low Supervision – mentoring programs that allow the volunteer and youth to be alone in an unsupervised location.

\*\*Medium Supervision – site-based mentoring programs that allow the volunteer and youth to be alone in an unsupervised location.

\*\*\*High Supervision – site-based mentoring programs that never allow the volunteer and youth to be alone in an unsupervised location.

<b>LEVEL OF VOLUNTEER SCREENING</b>					
Mentoring Program Category	Type 1	Type 2	Type 3	Type 4	Type 5
Written application	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Interview	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fingerprints – State and Federal	Yes	Yes	Yes	Recommended	Recommended
State Name Check	Yes	Yes	Yes	Recommended	Recommended
Driving Record Check	Recommended if volunteer will transport youth				
Reference Checks (Personal and Professional)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Recommended	Recommended

(Oregon Mentors Provider Council, 2003).

youth-serving programs in your area, you might want to look at how they are screening volunteers and seek their advice in developing your own procedure. In addition, local law enforcement or government social service agencies (such as foster care agencies) might also be able to provide guidance. It is important to remember that standard background check procedures vary from state to state.

There are a few ground rules that apply across the board for mentoring programs. First, you will need to develop a list of events or offenses that automatically disqualify a potential mentor. The disqualifying offenses should be included in your mentor eligibility policy and are nonnegotiable.

There are three things that may show up on a background check for which there are *no mitigating circumstances*: past history of sexual abuse of children, conviction of any crime in which children were involved, and any history of violent or sexually exploitative behavior.

Because of the seriousness of these three offenses, your program may also wish to consider running a background check through the sex offender registries created under states' "Megan's Laws." It is important to note that these registries will show sex offenders living in your state regardless of what state they were convicted in. While a standard, state-level, criminal history check will show all crimes, in addition to sex offenses, it will only list those that occurred in a particular state.

In addition to these, and any other events/offenses a program determines to be grounds for disqualification, programs should also develop a list of events that could potentially disqualify a potential volunteer and guidelines for judging the relevance of the event.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Davis, N.S., Grosso, K.L., & American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law. (1998). *Guidelines for the screening of persons working with children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities in need of support*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
- Graff, L. (1999). *Beyond police checks: The definitive volunteer and employee screening guidebook*. Carp, Ontario: Graff and Associates, Inc.
- Jucovy, L. (2000). *Mentoring sexual minority youth*. Technical Assistance Packet #2. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Patterson, J., & Oliver, B. (2002). *The season of hope: A risk management guide to youth-serving nonprofits*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Risk Management Center.
- Patterson, J., with Tremper, C. & Rypkema, P. (1995). *Child abuse prevention primer for your organization*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Risk Management Center.
- White, L.T., Patterson, J., & Herman, M.L. (1998). *More than a matter of trust: Managing the risks of mentoring*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Risk Management Center.

For example, under what circumstances would your program accept a mentor with a misdemeanor on her record? Would it matter how long ago it happened? Are some misdemeanors of more concern to your program than others? What has the applicant told you about the event? This list of potentially disqualifying events and “mitigating circumstances” should provide guidance for staff when an offense is not covered by the eligibility policy and there is room for interpretation and use of judgment.

In addition to the risk management-related information gathered by these screening tools, programs should also make sure that their procedure gathers information on the applicant’s work and family responsibilities, other volunteer commitments and experiences, their understanding of a mentor’s role, what they are hoping to get out of being a mentor, and other factors that may give you an indication of whether they are suitable for your program, and if so, the type of child they might work best with. If your program does these things, you can be assured that your screening procedures cover both safety issues and the suitability of the volunteer.

## Pre-Match Training for All New Mentors and Mentees

Providing training for your new mentors and mentees must be a requirement of your program. If your matches are going to be even remotely successful, you must provide the knowledge, skills, and guidance necessary for your volunteers and youth to feel comfortable in their new roles and their new relationships. This initial training for mentors and mentees needs to take place before a match is made.

To make these trainings successful, you will need to have trained, skilled facilitators. While there are many guides and training curricula available to assist in developing the content of these trainings, it is important that facilitators are experienced in delivering training for both adult and youth audiences. Knowing how to conduct a good training is as important as the content being delivered. Program staff conducting mentor/mentee training sessions should be encouraged to attend a “train the trainer” type of workshop to improve their facilitation skills if necessary.

Often programs will use outside trainers who have expertise on specific topics. This can be a good way to establish community partnerships and expand the knowledge base that your own staff can draw from. If you do use outside trainers, you must make sure that the content they provide is consistent with the rest of your pre-match training and is aligned with your program’s mission and goals.

In addition to having qualified staff to conduct the training, it is critical that programs adapt or, if necessary, develop a written training curriculum for both mentors and mentees. As with the policy and procedure manual your program has developed, a written training manual serves as a sustainable resource for all current and future staff. Having written materials to draw from will allow for consistency of training over time and across trainers. While not intended to be a comprehensive outline, what follows is a list of

the essential content areas for a pre-match training curriculum:

### **Program Overview/Orientation**

Although already covered at some point in the recruitment process and initial orientation, any pre-match training should begin with a review of your program’s history, mission, and policies and procedures. Including this information one last time will make sure that all your mentors and mentees are on the same page when it comes to things such as reporting requirements, the obligations and responsibilities of the match, and the outcome goals of the program. You should also touch on all your policies during this training. It is especially important to review your program’s policies regarding confidentiality, unacceptable behavior, and child abuse reporting at this time.

### **Defining the Roles of Both the Mentor and the Mentee**

Often, volunteers and youth who are new to a program have different opinions about the boundaries, roles, and responsibilities of the mentoring relationship. Both parties will need a clear set of “Do’s and Don’ts” that is appropriate to your program. Youth, in particular, may need help in understanding the role of the mentor in their lives, while mentors may need extra guidance in knowing where to draw the line in their effort to support the youth.

### **Strategies for Starting the Match**

Both mentors and mentees will need some guidance on getting through the often rough initial stages of a match. This training should address the natural progression of the match that participants can expect, the importance of building trust, and some exercises and activities that the match can do during their initial meetings. It

should also introduce the support services your program makes available to assist the match on an ongoing basis.

### **Communication Skills Development**

Effective communication skills form the very core of any successful mentoring relationship. Without the ability to communicate effectively through active listening and personal sharing, mentoring relationships fail to achieve the bond that leads to positive outcomes. Your program should provide training for mentors and mentees on listening skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, and sharing personal information.

### **Diversity Training**

Mentoring relationships often pair individuals from very different cultural backgrounds, age groups, and socioeconomic situations. Your program should provide training to both mentors and mentees on respecting differences, valuing diversity, and cultural sensitivity.

### **Youth Development**

Mentors will benefit greatly from having an understanding of what constitutes positive youth development. Your training should provide them with a basic understanding of the needs of the youth in your program and the strategies youth and mentors might

employ to address these needs. This training should also explore how mentoring fits into the larger framework of youth development. Broadly speaking, youth development not only includes mentoring, but also peer, family, school, and other community support that enables youth to make healthy and responsible decisions.

## **Self-Assessment Questions**

- Does our program offer pre-match training sessions for both mentors and mentees?
- Do our trainers and facilitators have the necessary skills and training to conduct these sessions?
- In what areas of our pre-match training are we weak?
- Does our program have a written training curriculum that reflects the goals of the program and the nature of our mentoring relationships?
- Are the following topics addressed in our training curriculum?:
  - Program policies, procedures, and goals
  - Mentor and mentee roles
  - Strategies for beginning the match
  - Communication skills
  - Diversity issues
  - Youth development
  - Crisis management
  - Networks of support
  - Other topics needed for our specific program
- Does our program use outside trainers? Could we improve our training by drawing from other individuals and organizations in the community?
- Have we been conducting evaluations of our training? If so, what are we doing with the results?

**Crisis Management and Networks of Support**

There may be times when the support youth need to cope with problems and situations is beyond a mentor's capacity or expertise. Mentors should be given indepth training on how to identify potential problems or crisis situations that may come up during the match. Mentors should be made aware of their limitations as volunteers to help in certain situations. They should also understand the role of your program's professional staff handling crisis situations through action and referral to other professional and supportive resources in the community.

Mentees should also be made aware of the network of support agencies available to them in their community and the limitations of their mentor to help them in certain situations.

**Child Abuse Reporting**

There are federal and state laws that require the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. Your training should give mentors an understanding of the legal responsibilities that they, and your program, have to report incidents of abuse. Mentors should be given training on how to spot potential abuse and how to handle the situation, while youth should receive information about what constitutes abuse and why they need to come forward and tell someone if they are being abused. Because of the legal and liability implications of this topic your program may want to bring in outside presenters with expertise on the topic of child abuse and reporting requirements for your county or state.

**Other Pre-Match Training Topics**

Depending on the goals and objectives of your program, you may wish to offer additional training topics to those listed above. For instance, if your program places a heavy emphasis on improved academic performance, you may want to train mentors on effective tutoring practices. If your program works with a specific population of youth, you may want to include additional information on that population that will allow the mentor to better understand his or her mentee. If your program works with older youth, you may want to include training for them on life skills or career development, emphasizing how their mentor may be able to help them. Your program should develop any additional training topics that will give both the youth and the volunteers the skills necessary to get the most out of participating in the program.

**Evaluation of the Training**

It is important that you have each training session evaluated by the participants. Ideally, evaluation should measure the mentor or mentee's specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes associated with the training content. This ensures that mentors and youth are getting the information they feel they need, and that they are engaged in the training process. Evaluating trainings will, over time, allow your program to improve the pre-match information that your program's participants receive.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. (1991). *Volunteer education and development manual*. Philadelphia, PA: Author.
- Bowman, R.P., & Bowman, S.C. (1997). *Co-piloting: A systematic mentoring program for reaching and encouraging young people*. Chapin, SC: YouthLight.
- Kapperich, C. (2002). *Mentoring answer book*. McHenry, IL: Big Brothers Big Sisters of McHenry County.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Building relationships: A guide for new mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #4. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Training new mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #5. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- National Mentoring Center. (2000). *Strengthening Mentoring Programs Training Curriculum, Modules: #7-Preparing to Facilitate, #8- JUMPstarting Your Mentors, #9- Connecting and Communicating, #10- Keeping the Relationship Going*. Portland, OR: NWREL.
- National Mentoring Working Group. (1991). *Mentor training curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America.
- Smink, J. (1999). *Training guide for mentors*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.
- Webster, B.E. (2000). *Get real. Get a mentor: how you can get to where you want to go with the help of a mentor*. Folsom, CA: Evaluation Management Training.
- Weinberger, S.G. (2000). *My mentor and me: 36 weekly activities for mentors and mentees to do together during the elementary school years*. Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership.
- Weinberger, S.G. (2001). *My mentor and me: The high school years. 36 activities and strategies for mentors and mentees to do together during the high school years*. Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership.

### Web:

- From the EMT Web site: Designing a Successful Mentor Training—<http://www.emt.org/userfiles/DesignTraining.pdf>
- Developmental Assets: An Overview—<http://www.search-institute.org/assets/>

## Established Matching Procedure

Matching youth in your program with an appropriate mentor is crucial, not only for the success of that individual match, but for the overall success of your program. As with your recruitment, screening, and training efforts, your procedure on making matches should be a reflection of your program's goals and objectives.

The first step in creating a matching procedure is the development of your matching criteria. Your program needs to identify what qualities you will be looking for in your mentors and mentees that will allow you to make a good match. What these criteria actually are will depend on the type of program you have and, as mentioned earlier, must be aligned with your program's mission and goals.

Some common matching criteria are:

- ◆ Same gender
- ◆ Similarity of racial/ethnic/cultural/language background
- ◆ Shared interests between the mentor and youth
- ◆ The mentor's personality and temperament
- ◆ The youth's personality and temperament
- ◆ Special needs of the youth that may be met by a particular mentor
- ◆ Geographic proximity between the mentor and youth
- ◆ Compatibility of available meeting times
- ◆ Similarity between the mentor's career and the career interests of the youth

### Designing a Matching Strategy

If your recruitment, intake, orientation, and pre-match training procedures are well designed, you should have gathered a great deal of relevant matching information about your mentors and mentees from their applications, interviews, reference checks, training sessions, and other interactions. The basic rule of thumb in making solid matches is to *consider*

*the needs and circumstances of the youth first, then try and find a mentor with suitable skills and qualities for that youth.*

Your program will need to decide which criteria carry more weight than others. Creating a hierarchy of criteria is one of the steps that aligns your matching procedure with your program's goals. For instance, if job skill development is the centerpiece of your program's desired outcomes, then it makes sense to weigh the mentor's career and the youth's career interests more heavily than other criteria. If your program puts a heavy emphasis on frequent, consistent meeting between the mentor and mentee, then geographic proximity and compatibility of meeting times may become more important.

Obviously, one particular piece of information cannot be weighted so heavily as to override all others. Simply decide what is important to your program being able to meet its objectives. You should also leave room in your process for "gut instincts." A good program coordinator sometimes senses that a particular adult and youth will just do well together. Be sure your strategy gives a voice to these intuitions.

The amount of time mentors and mentees spend on waiting lists also needs to be factored into your matching process. If your program has too many volunteers and youth waiting long periods of time in order to find the "perfect match," it may be an indication that your matching criteria are too stringent or that your recruitment efforts may need to target more appropriate volunteers. The one thing a program should never do is to make matches just to reach a particular benchmark, even if it means not meeting requirements of an agency funding your program through a grant. As mentioned many times throughout this guide, low-quality mentoring relationships that fail can leave your youth worse off than they were before. One healthy, solid match is preferable to 300 dysfunctional matches that meet

a funding requirement. Make your matches for the right reasons.

### **Designing a Matching Procedure**

Once you have developed written criteria for making the matches, you will need to decide on your program's step-by-step procedure. You will need to determine which staff members will actually do the matching, what the role of the parents will be, and how the mentors and mentees are informed of the match and formally introduced.

#### *Staff Role*

Your program will likely have multiple staff members involved in the matching process. One may be familiar with the volunteers; one may be working with the youth; another may have gained some insight while conducting a pre-match training. Your program might have several staff members that do all these tasks. No matter who does the actual matching, the key is to have a procedure in place by which all of the information and insights about the adult and youth that have been gathered up to this point in the process can be taken into account in making a match. This may require extensive communication among different staff members who are working with mentors and youth, but it is important to have all the "criteria pieces" in place if you are going to make the best match. Ideally, the mentor or mentee's case files should be the repository of all the information your staff will need to make an appropriate match.

#### *Parent/Guardian Role*

Most programs choose to give parents or guardians a voice in the matching process. This may involve a meeting with the mentor prior to the match or during their first meeting with the mentee. It may be something as simple as a "match approval" form that they sign. Involving parents or guardians in the matching process can ease some of the tensions and misunderstandings that can form when a mentor becomes a presence in the youth's life. Your program will need to develop a process that defines the parent's or guardian's role. At the very least, written parent/guardian permission for the youth to participate in the program must be obtained and kept on file.

### **Self-Assessment Questions**

- Does our program have a written plan for making appropriate matches?
- Has our program determined what our relevant, weighted criteria are for making a match?
- Do these matching criteria reflect our program's mission and goals?
- Do our mentor and mentee intake and training procedures provide our staff with the necessary information to make informed matching decisions?
- Who on our staff is responsible for making matches?
- Have we provided parents or guardians a role in the matching process?
- Are we putting the needs of the child first in making matches?
- Do we prepare mentors and mentees for their first meeting?
- Do the first meetings between mentors and mentees have structure and goals?

### *The First Meeting*

Your program should develop a structured first meeting between the mentor and mentee. Many programs have staff facilitate an initial meeting that takes place at the program site, rather than simply having the mentor and mentee meet off-site for the first time. This first meeting should have some clear goals and activities that will help the match get off to a good start. You will need to give both the mentor and mentee information and insight about each other. You may also want to develop a role for parents at this initial meeting. The next steps for the match, such as future meeting times and the schedule for checking in with your staff, should be covered at the first meeting as well.

### Key Resources

#### Print:

- Adams, S.W. (1998). *Developing a school-based mentor program for at risk youth*. Chesterfield, VA: Communities in Schools of Chesterfield.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Recruiting mentors: A guide to finding volunteers to work with youth*. Technical Assistance Packet #3. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Jucovy, L. (2002). *Same-race and cross-race matching*. Technical Assistance Packet #7. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.

## Established Procedure for Monitoring Matches

Monitoring and supervising your matches is yet another essential aspect of running a successful mentoring program. All the effort that went into recruiting participants, delivering pre-match training, and making appropriate matches will be wasted if your program does not provide ongoing support and supervision.

Monitoring matches ensures that your program is continuing to provide a solid foundation that will support the development of successful mentoring relationships. Recent research has shown that, on average, it takes at least six months to a year to begin seeing the desired outcomes from mentoring (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002; Sipe 1996). Neglected matches that disintegrate before this point mean that your program has no chance to fulfill its mission or achieve its goals. Once again, this research shows that unsupported mentor/mentee matches fail and that mentoring relationships that fail early on may actually do more harm to the youth than if they never had a mentor.

Monitoring your matches is also one of your prime risk management tools. Your staff needs to be informed as to what is going on in those mentoring relationships, not just to ensure that they are going well, but to assess whether there may be serious problems with the behavior of the mentor or mentee. Therefore, it is extremely important that your program implements a systematic procedure for monitoring your matches. This provides support for the match and assists in the early identification and resolution of potential difficulties in the mentor/mentee relationship.

### Developing a Monitoring Procedure

While the exact system for monitoring relationships can vary among different types of programs, it is important that there is some form of step-by-step procedure in place and those staff members in

charge of tracking the matches follow it. As your staff follows the procedure they should keep detailed written records about the progress and problems of each match. Keeping written records ensures that, in the event of staff turnover or program expansion, new staff can learn the history and characteristics of a match.

Many programs have created a monitoring procedure similar to this:

1. Contact the mentor, youth, and parent/guardian (if the parent is involved) within the first two weeks of the match.
2. Check in with the mentor and youth every two weeks for the first few months of the match.
3. Check in monthly with the mentor and youth for the rest of the first year, then quarterly after that, if the match is doing well.
4. Check in with the parent/guardian periodically.

Once you have established a schedule for checking in on your matches, you will need to determine what information you will collect and what questions you will ask. Some common themes to build your questions around are:

- ◆ How often do the mentor/mentee meet?
- ◆ Are the mentor and youth following the program ground rules?
- ◆ Has the youth been resistant to the match?
- ◆ Are both the mentor and mentee satisfied with the activities they have been doing?
- ◆ How is the communication between the mentor and the mentee?
- ◆ Are there any special problems that have come up?
- ◆ Is the mentor feeling overwhelmed?

- ◆ What are the “red flags” that indicate a match is in trouble?
- ◆ Is there anything that the program can do to help the relationship further?
- ◆ Do the mentor/parent/mentee have any grievances or positive developments they would like to communicate?
- ◆ Has the mentor/parent/mentee been submitting all the information needed for evaluation purposes?

While a program may be able to track whether a match is meeting or not by having the mentor send in an activity form every month, the bulk of your match supervision should be done via phone calls and face-to-face meetings. This will allow your staff to gather more in-depth information, ask follow-up questions as needed, and offer advice and encouragement.

Staff members who are monitoring matches may need training themselves in active listening and problem solving. They will also need to create an atmosphere in which mentors, youth, and parents all feel comfortable sharing information with the program. When checking in with mentors and mentees your staff should take the time to thank volunteers for their commitment, make the youth feel good about having a mentor, and offer helpful tips and activity suggestions as needed.

### **Actively Use the Information You Gather**

Your program should develop a list of “red flags” that may signal a match that is having difficulty. These red flags should trigger appropriate action on the part of your program. There should be a strong connection between the information gathered during match supervision and the forms of match support you provide, such as ongoing training and conflict mediation. Staff should also be familiar with outside community resources, creating a referral system for dealing with problems that are outside the program’s scope and capacity.

Your program will also need to decide at what point a match between a specific mentor and mentee becomes detrimental and counterproductive. If your

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Has our program determined which staff members will be responsible for monitoring matches?
- Does our program have a written, step-by-step procedure for monitoring matches?
- What is our timeline for checking in with the mentor, mentee, and parents throughout the course of the match?
- What information does our program want to collect through the monitoring process?
- What questions and tracking tools need to be developed to ensure we collect the needed information?
- What are the “red flags” that might indicate a match is having serious problems?
- Is our staff properly trained to effectively monitor matches?
- Are program participants comfortable sharing information about the match with our program staff?
- How does information gathered during the monitoring process relate to ongoing mentor training and other support that our program provides the match?

staff has made several attempts to rectify problems in a relationship to no avail, it may be time to dissolve the match and find a better fit for both the volunteer and youth. Your monitoring procedure should give guidance for handling your toughest, least successful matches.

In addition to this type of ongoing match monitoring, some researchers are suggesting that mentoring programs periodically and formally assess the quality of mentoring relationships (Jucovy, 2001). This is often done through surveys given to mentors and mentees on a regular basis. Information gathered during this type of assessment can help guide your matching, training, and support systems. Foundation #5 of this guide covers assessment and evaluation in more detail.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Recruiting mentors: A guide to finding volunteers to work with youth*. Technical Assistance Packet #3. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Supporting mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #6. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Jucovy, L. (2002). *Measuring the quality of mentor-youth relationships: A tool for mentoring programs*. Technical Assistance Packet #8. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.

## Support, Ongoing Training, and Recognition of Volunteers

Volunteers are the single most important asset to the success of mentoring programs. With all the time and energy it takes to recruit, screen, train, and match a mentor, it is imperative that programs develop and implement a support system for their volunteers. Research has shown that volunteers who do not feel supported by their program, who are not given the resources and skills to be successful, and are not recognized for their contributions, are more likely to stop participating (Sipe, 1999). If your program has large numbers of mentors who are dropping out, then not only have you wasted all the effort that led to them being matched, but you are also hindering your program's ability to meet its objectives and, quite possibly, are harming youth with brief, failed matches. If a program is to be successful at all, it needs to retain its mentors by offering ongoing training, personalized assistance, mentor support groups, and a process for recognizing and thanking mentors for their efforts.

### Ongoing Training

It is important to provide additional training opportunities for your mentors after they have been matched. As mentoring relationships evolve over time, your mentors may need training that goes beyond the basics covered during pre-match training. Potential topics for ongoing training include:

- ◆ Diversity and “cultural sensitivity”
- ◆ Helping mentees set goals
- ◆ Handling conflict or problems with the mentee's parents/guardian
- ◆ Child abuse and neglect
- ◆ Helping youth build self-esteem
- ◆ Career planning
- ◆ Effective tutoring
- ◆ Difficult subjects like sexuality, drug use, and gang activity
- ◆ Handling crisis situations that come up during the relationship

Chances are that as you monitor your matches over time, you will begin to see various topics and issues that come up for many mentors in your program. Use these topics to drive the content of your ongoing training. If several mentors are having trouble with their mentee's family, organize a workshop to give them some advanced skills in dealing with the situation. If many of your program's youth are beginning to prepare for college, give your mentors some training on how to help their mentees with that process. The key is to tailor your additional training to meet the needs of your program's volunteers and its mission. Providing this training, as needed, will help your mentors feel supported, listened to, and confident in what they are doing.

You might want to consider using mentors who have been matched for a while in training newer mentors. Often these veteran mentors can “mentor” new volunteers, sharing things they have learned about relating to their youth. New mentors may be hesitant to convey problems to your program staff, but might open up to an experienced fellow mentor.

As with your pre-match training, you should have mentors complete post-training evaluations so that you can gauge its effectiveness and improve training efforts over time.

### Personalized Assistance

In addition to offering ongoing group training for mentors, it's also important to offer more personalized assistance for individual mentors. Mentors may encounter problems or difficulties with their mentees that can range from simple to quite complex and serious. Mentors may not know how to handle a particular situation in which they find themselves. Whatever the issue, be sure that your staff is supportive of the mentors and designs specific guidance, intervention, or referral to help them address the situation.

Some examples of this type of assistance include:

- ◆ Active listening and simple problem solving
- ◆ Mediation or conflict resolution between a mentor and mentee
- ◆ Group meetings between involved parties (mentor, youth, parent, teachers, program staff, etc.) to address a specific problem
- ◆ Referral to outside support systems to handle problems beyond the scope of your program or the mentor's ability
- ◆ Checking in more frequently with an "at-risk" match

Whatever your program can do on a case-by-case basis to let the mentors know that your staff is there to support them will lead to having more committed mentors and stronger mentor/youth relationships.

### **Mentor Support Groups**

Offering a mentor support group is an increasingly popular way to make mentors feel more connected to the program and see their mentoring relationship in a

larger context. Your program will need to decide where and how often the group will meet. Your staff will also need to provide some structure for the meeting and some guidelines to ensure confidentiality for the youth in the matches being discussed.

Support groups focus mostly around the mentors talking and sharing on these topics:

- ◆ What is going well in the relationship
- ◆ What people are learning about how to be an effective mentor
- ◆ What isn't working in the relationship
- ◆ Specific questions or situations which the group can assist with

Your staff should provide facilitated discussion on all these topics (and others you may want to address), that allows the mentors to share their triumphs, get the help they need from other mentors who may have faced similar challenges, tap into the knowledge of your staff, and feel connected to the other mentors and the overall work your program is doing.

## Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program provide opportunities for ongoing training for mentors?
- If so, how often, and what process do we use to determine these additional training topics?
- Does our program have connections to individuals or organizations in the community that could provide training on topics with which our own staff does not have expertise?
- Do we have a process to provide personalized assistance to mentors and matches that may be in trouble or are facing difficult issues?
- Does our program offer a mentor support group?
- In what ways can we improve our process for recognizing and thanking mentors for their efforts?
- Do we know the level of satisfaction and feelings of support that our mentors have?

Some programs have even adopted technology-based support for mentors. Some host e-mail discussion groups (listservs) where mentors can seek advice and gain support. Other programs collect and disseminate frequently asked questions to all mentors via e-mail. It is important to remember that when electronic means of support are used, extra steps must be taken to ensure the confidentiality of mentors and youth.

### **Mentor Recognition**

Your program should provide your mentors with some kind of formal recognition for all they do for the youth in your program. This recognition can take many forms:

- ◆ An annual awards dinner, picnic, or reception
- ◆ Designating a mentor/mentee match of the month
- ◆ Gifts or awards on the anniversary of their participation
- ◆ Profiling their match on your Web site or in your newsletter
- ◆ Letters of appreciation
- ◆ A handwritten note

Mentors who feel truly appreciated and valued will be more likely to stay motivated and involved, will have more fun participating in your program, and will be more likely to recommend volunteering with your program to others.

## Key Resources

### **Print:**

- Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. (1991). *Volunteer education and development manual*. Philadelphia, PA: Author.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Recruiting mentors: A guide to finding volunteers to work with youth*. Technical Assistance Packet #3. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Supporting mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #6. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- National Mentoring Working Group. (1991). *Mentor training curriculum*. Alexandria, VA: United Way of America.

### **Web:**

- Energize, Inc.'s Volunteer Recognition Page—  
<http://www.energizeinc.com/ideas.html>
- From EMT's Web site: Responsible Mentoring: Talking About Drugs, Sex and Other Difficult Issues—  
<http://www.emt.org/userfiles/RespMentoringBooklet.pdf>

## Established Match Closure Procedure

It is inevitable that some of your program's matches will end. In an ideal situation, the formal matches your program creates would end naturally after a lengthy period of time. Other times, the program structure may dictate the end of a formal program match. An example of a planned ending is the case of a school-based program where the match terminates at the end of the school year. In less than ideal circumstances, some matches may terminate early due to a wide variety of factors, such as:

- ◆ An obvious noncompatibility ("bad match")
- ◆ Problems within a match (such as disinterest by the youth or communication problems)
- ◆ Youth or mentor moving out of the area
- ◆ A change in the amount of time a mentor is able to devote to the program
- ◆ Violation of your rules of conduct

The end of the relationship, for whatever reason, can be difficult for both the mentor and mentee. Your program should provide support services for both groups to help them make the transition out of the relationship and, when applicable, prepare them for a possible new mentoring relationship.

The first step in managing the closure of a match is recognizing that there are different profiles of match termination. Termination that is a matter of program scope (youth ages out of the program, goals of the match are achieved, etc.) obviously differs from a match ending as a result of a violation of conduct.

Because matches end for a variety of reasons, your program should have written procedures and policies for handling each type of closure. Even if you have just one overarching closure procedure, be sure that it has the flexibility to handle the many circumstances that lead to matches dissolving. Do not assume that the process that works in closing down a match where the youth is moving away will work for dis-

solving a match where there were serious problems with the level of commitment by the mentor.

Most programs use exit interviews for the mentor, mentee, and parents/guardians as the basic framework around which to build a closure process. While there may be some aspects of your process that cut across different types of closures (such as the questions asked during the exit interview or policies regarding future contact), be sure to tailor the overall process for the youth, mentor, and parents to meet their particular situation.

### Closure for the Youth

Many of the youth participating in your program have already been let down by adults in their life. Often, the inherent value of your program is in providing them with something they have been lacking: a stable, caring adult presence. As mentioned throughout this guide, youth may actually be hurt worse by a failed mentoring relationship than if they had not participated at all.

For this reason, programs must take great care to offer support and provide context for youth whose matches are ending. Among the strategies used by programs in helping mentees through this process are:

- ◆ If possible, giving the mentee ample warning of the closure of the match
- ◆ Having the mentor discuss the end of the match with the youth (preferably in person)
- ◆ Having program staff explain to the youth why the match is ending
- ◆ Encouraging the match to do something special together on their last meeting or exchange a small gift (if allowed by your program)
- ◆ Encouraging the youth to express his or her feelings about the match ending, either to the mentor or with program staff

## Self-Assessment Questions

- What are some of the reason why matches may end in our program?
- What are the “red flags” and indicators that a match may need to be terminated by our staff?
- Do we have written procedures and policies that address the closure of matches?
- Do our procedures and policies take into account the many different reasons why a match may end?
- Do our procedures and policies provide opportunities for positive closure for the youth, volunteer, and parents/guardian?
- Is our staff aware of outside support services that may help a mentor or mentee deal with the closure of the match or move on to another mentoring opportunity?

- ◆ Providing access and referral to counseling or other support services
- ◆ Providing guidance on continuing with the program or, in the case of a youth who is moving, finding an appropriate mentoring opportunity in their new location

At the very least, programs should provide the youth with an opportunity to have closure with his or her mentor and get support and guidance from program staff. Once again, remember that your program exists solely for the benefit of these youth. Put as much consideration and caring into how you handle the ending of their relationship as you did into creating it.

### Closure for the Mentor

Your mentors should also be provided the opportunity to have closure with their mentee and meet with your program staff regarding their future. A lot of how you handle closure with mentors will depend on why the relationship ended. Mentors may wish to be matched with another youth. If not, they may need your assistance in finding other volunteer opportunities that are more suitable for them. If they are mov-

ing, they may want to find a similar volunteer opportunity elsewhere. And if their relationship with the youth ended poorly, they may need referral to counseling or other support services.

Many programs incorporate information on match closure into their ongoing mentor training so that the mentor is better prepared for the process when it does happen. Others prefer to handle the situations in a one-to-one setting at the time of closure so that the process can be customized to the particular situation. No matter how your program handles closure with mentors, keep this thought in mind: volunteer mentors are a rare and precious commodity. If the termination of their relationship is handled with care, they will be much more likely to want to continue making a difference in someone’s life as a mentor.

### Closure for Parents or Guardians

Your program also needs to include parents or guardians in the closure process. Parents/guardians may be angry about the match failing, or feel that the program has let them down. They may need assistance in finding other services for the youth to make

the transition easier. They will certainly have questions and concerns about the end of the match and what happens next. Your program should take time to meet with parents and guardians to answer any questions they may have and to refer them to whatever other assistance they may need.

The written results and outcomes of your exit interviews and other closure procedures should be kept in the mentor's and youth's case files for future reference.

### **Utilize Your Policy Regarding Future Contact**

As mentioned earlier, one of the key policies your program must have in place is one regarding future contact between the mentor, the mentee, and the youth's family. Without a clear policy that is communicated to all parties, a program can run into a host of liability and behavioral problems once a match ends. Your policy should explain in clear terms what mentors, mentees, and parents may and may not do regarding future contact. Ideally, these policies should be spelled out in a contract that all parties sign at the time of closure.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Adams, S.W. (1998). *Developing a school-based mentor program for at risk youth*. Chesterfield, VA: Communities in Schools of Chesterfield.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Supporting mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #6. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.

## Stable and Appropriate Number of Matches With a High Retention Rate

If your program has implemented the recruitment, screening, training, matching, and volunteer support strategies outlined in this section, your program should be well on its way to meeting the benchmarks for mentor/mentee matches established internally by your program or externally as a funding requirement. While the quality of your matches is what matters most in serving the youth in your program, having a significant quantity of matches ensures that your program is having a real impact on your target population.

While a program should never sacrifice quality just to inflate the number of matches, the fact remains that bringing your program up to its appropriate “scale” is important. Your program exists to help youth, and you should be reaching out to as many as possible. Having a healthy number of stable matches is also an indicator that your recruitment strategies are effective, that your matching policies work, and that your volunteers are supported.

A high retention rate is one of the most important factors in achieving a solid base of matches. A high retention of your current matches not only tells you that your matching and support practices are working, but motivates your staff and supports the out-

reach of your program. Conversely, if you are bringing in a large number of mentors and making large numbers of matches but concurrently have a large number of matches that end prematurely or have a high mentor/youth turnover rate, you are undermining your program’s success. Early match termination and match turnover will make it difficult to demonstrate the measurable outcomes that justify your program’s existence. Finally, if you are not maintaining high retention rates your program staff may have a negative impact on your staff and decrease their motivation.

A high retention rate is also an indicator that your program has a good chance of achieving its desired outcomes for the youth. As mentioned earlier, research suggests that the longer the relationship lasts, the greater the chance you will see positive outcomes for the youth (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

In essence, this program component is the end result of the previous components discussed in this chapter. Having an appropriate number of sustained matches is an excellent indicator of overall program health and is a shared characteristic of all successful programs.

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Is our program meeting our internal benchmarks for numbers of successful matches?
- Are we meeting any benchmarks associated with funding sources?
- What is the average length for our matches?
- Can we serve more youth without compromising the quality of the program?
- If we are unhappy with our number of matches or the number of failed matches we have, what can we change in our program procedures and structure that can improve the situation?
- Is our program conducting a local evaluation that measures both the quality and quantity of matches?

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Mertinko, E., Novotney, L.C., Baker, T.K., & Lange, J. (2000). *Evaluating your program: A beginner's self-evaluation workbook for mentoring programs*. Potomac, MD: Information Technology International, & Calverton, MD: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.
- Saito, R.N. (2001). *What's working? Tools for evaluating your mentoring program*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

## Foundation #3: Effective Community Partnerships

Your program cannot exist alone on an island. For you to be successful, you will need to collaborate effectively with other community organizations. This includes not only organizations with which you have formal partnerships, but also less formal collaborations and relationships with other youth service agencies in your community. This section looks at the importance of making these connections and using them to strengthen your program. The necessary program components for effective partnerships are:

- **Effective collaboration with partner organizations**

- **Collaborating and networking with other local youth service organizations**

***End result:*** By forming these types of partnerships, your program can enhance both the quality and scope of the mentoring services you provide and gain increased visibility, credibility, and presence in the community.

## Effective Collaboration With Partner Organizations

When designing your mentoring program it is likely that you will establish formal partnerships with schools, other youth service agencies, and various community groups. For example, your mentoring activities may be hosted in a local school or recreation facility. You may intend to use a large local employer or service club, such as Lions or Rotary Club, as a primary source for recruiting mentors. If your program is grant funded you might be required to collaborate with another agency, which has led to a partnership with a school district. No matter what the connections are, successful mentoring programs invest a lot of time and resources into cultivating relationships with program partners and making the relationship mutually beneficial to all parties involved.

For these partnerships to be effective, it is essential that program staff, agency administrators, school and community partners, and agency board members have a clear understanding of the goals, objectives, and procedures of your mentoring program. This shared understanding is important because it ensures that all stakeholders are able to understand, articulate, and carry out the work that is mutually agreed upon.

Ideally, all partner organizations need to have formal written agreements such as a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that clearly delineates expectations, including which aspects of program operation, oversight, and implementation each agency is responsible for. Your program will also need to develop a plan to ensure that the obligations, roles, and responsibilities of the agreements are

met. These roles and responsibilities may include such things as referral of students to the program, sharing of information (such as attendance records or test scores), or the collection and submission of data for evaluation purposes.

Without having this written, joint understanding of the workscope and the roles and responsibilities of each partner organization, your collaboration is tenuous and could abruptly end (for example, if staff turnover occurs within a key partner). This shared understanding is especially important if these partnerships are tied to funding; one entity not meeting their obligations can threaten the funding of the entire project.

It is also important that your formal partners be kept up to date on the progress of your program. Ideally, there will be representatives of your partner organizations on your steering committee or advisory

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have a written MOU that documents each partner's roles and responsibilities?
- Do we have a process in place to ensure that the obligations of the MOU are met when staff turnover occurs at partner organizations or among our own personnel?
- Do we have a designated contact person at each partner organization?
- Are there special considerations related to our collaborations with other organizations that are tied to specific funding?
- What is our process for ensuring compliance with the MOU?
- Is there a process in place to deal with a partner not fulfilling the obligations of an agreed-upon MOU?
- How often are we sharing information related to progress of the program with our partner organizations?

council. In the absence of such representation, your program needs to regularly meet with its partners to discuss how the collaborations are going and to inform them of the progress made toward the goals of the program. These meetings may simply be information sharing. They can also serve as opportunities to iron out problems, clarify expectations, update roles and responsibilities, or let your partners know that their involvement is having a positive impact on the program.

Some of the key strategies for maintaining these relationships include:

- ◆ *Establishing expectations for the community partner organization.* For example, if you expect the school district to provide attendance, academic, and other data to fulfill the data collection requirements for a grant, those expectations should be in writing and reviewed periodically with the school district.
- ◆ *Identifying a primary contact person* and ensuring that contact person is aware of the expectations of the partnership. Orientation for key partner contacts should occur whenever there is staff turnover at that position.
- ◆ *Maintaining routine communication with the community partner.* This communication might include brief phone calls, frequent print/e-mail updates, and periodic face-to-face meetings.
- ◆ *Revising expectations as the needs of the project change.*
- ◆ *Celebrating program successes!*

Building these solid relationships with your formal partner organizations drastically improves your program's ability to deliver quality services to youth and positions your program to meet its internal benchmarks and external funding requirements.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Jucovy, L. (2000). *The ABCs of school-based mentoring*. Technical Assistance Packet #1. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Building relationships: A guide for new mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #4. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.

### Web:

- Sample MOU from the application for OJJDP's Juvenile Mentoring Program: [http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/jump/solicitation\\_2002/appendb.html](http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/jump/solicitation_2002/appendb.html)

## Collaboration and Networking With Other Local Youth-Service Organizations

Youth need access to a wide variety of support services and opportunities to reach their potential. Even the most intensive mentoring programs are only one small piece of the larger spectrum of programs and services needed by, and offered to, youth in a community. For a mentoring program to be truly effective in assisting youth, it must actively collaborate and network with other youth-serving organizations.

These informal collaborations extend your program beyond your formal relationships with community partners. Informal collaboration with other youth service providers builds your program into the network of services seeking to improve the health, education, and welfare of youth in the community. By integrating into this network of service providers, mentoring programs can potentially develop new interagency program efforts, influence local public policy, and expand the resource and support base for the long-term sustainability of the program. In addition, collaborating with other youth-serving organizations allows your mentoring program to stay informed about other services available to youth in your community.

Perhaps the most important outcome of collaboration with other organizations is the improvement of

your services to youth. Some youth participating in mentoring programs will invariably face serious challenges and difficult circumstances that are beyond what your mentors and agency can provide. If your program is networked in the community and has established collaborations, it will be much easier to refer youth and their families to other services that can augment the mentoring relationships you are providing. This creates a more comprehensive web of services and ensures that your youth are getting assistance across all their areas of need. Helping to facilitate this network of support for youth will ideally lead to better outcomes for your youth and even greater impact for your program than if your mentoring services are offered in a vacuum.

### **The Value of Community Coalitions**

Youth-oriented advisory groups or community coalitions already exist in many communities. Often these interagency groups are sponsored by local health or social service departments, schools, or possibly a local United Way or volunteer center. Often these coalitions welcome new partners.

In the absence of an existing coalition, your agency might consider organizing one. The process would include the now-familiar steps of conducting a needs

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have a specific plan to reach out to local youth service organizations?
- Are we part of local family- and youth-oriented community coalitions?
- Are we able to take the lead in starting a community coalition if one does not exist?
- What information from our initial needs assessment can inform our community partnerships?
- Have we visited other agencies in our community and do we understand what other youth services are available locally? Have other potential partners visited us?
- Have we invited representatives from other organizations to be on our advisory council or board of directors?

assessment and informational interviews with other agencies. This will allow your program to better understand the needs, goals, and objectives of other community organizations and discuss how broad youth coalitions can benefit *all* the agencies involved. By understanding the needs of potential collaborators, you can begin to look for common ground that can translate into an “agenda” for collaboration. In its initial stages, community coalitions often are simply a forum for information exchange. As these coalitions mature they can begin to tackle issues such as the intentional coordination of services, development of joint programming efforts, and conducting of organized campaigns to educate the community and policymakers about the needs of youth.

While participating in community coalitions may seem tangential to your mentoring program, the benefits of strong community involvement will become apparent over time. Through effective collaboration, all the agencies involved become more efficient, strengthen their internal capacity, and find support that will help sustain their efforts.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Building relationships: A guide for new mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #4. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Mattessich, P., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. (2001). *Collaboration: What makes it work?* St. Paul, MN: Amherst H. Wilder Foundation.

### Web:

- Sustainability Online, Collaboration—  
<http://www.sustainabilityonline.com/HTML/Collaboration>
- Web of Support Toolkit—  
<http://www.savethechildren.org/wosokit/pdfs.html>

## Foundation #4: Sustainable Resource Development

One of the biggest factors in making your program a long-term success is the creation and implementation of a resource development plan. Too often programs fail to plan properly for long-term financial stability or do not take advantage of all the resources at their disposal. Caught up in the procurement of a particular grant or funding stream, not to mention their day-to-day operations, agencies find it difficult to comprehensively plan for the future. No matter what your program's current funding situation is, it is important to have an ongoing plan for resource development.

There is obviously a large body of fundraising and nonprofit sustainability literature available to people running mentoring programs. What is presented in this section is a basic outline of a resource development process. You will likely need to consult other resources as you go about building your program's sustainable future.

The following program components can help your program plan for and achieve long-term stability:

- **Established Resource Development Committee**

- **Assessment of Internal Resources**

- **Assessment of External Resources**

- **Written Resource Development Plan**

***End result:*** By implementing the process outlined here, your program will have a thorough understanding of your current resources and clear direction for seeking varying types of support that can keep your program going in the future.

## Established Resource Development Committee

The first step in ensuring the long-term financial and resource stability of your mentoring program is the formation of a resource development committee. This committee's function is to assess both the internal and external resources that your program can potentially access and to develop your written resource development plan. Forming such a committee is more effective than assigning this responsibility to one person. The distributed responsibility of a committee ensures that, if the one person leaves, all of your sustainability efforts do not also leave.

This is one aspect of your program's operations where it is vital that your board of directors (or, advisory council, if your program is not directed by a board) is actively involved and engaged. Ideally, your development committee will be composed of board members, with volunteers, representatives from partner organizations, and program staff selected as needed. If you do decide to include staff members, keep in mind that they may often be too busy actually running the mentoring program to devote much time to the committee's activities and responsibilities.

The committee must have a clear goal, firm ownership of the process, and access to supporting resources. Often programs struggle for financial and other support because no one has stepped up and taken charge of sustainability efforts. There may even

be a plan in place, but it is of little use if no one is following through on it. Make sure that your development committee members understand that the sustainability of the program rests on their shoulders.

This committee has three main functions that will be discussed later in this section:

- ◆ Mapping of internal resources
- ◆ Mapping of external resources
- ◆ Creation and implementation of a written development plan

To carry out the task of resource development the committee's effort will likely involve two phases. The first phase will be an intensive planning process that will require significant time commitment and skilled facilitation. This planning needs to be governed by a relatively short timeline (such as an intensive two- to three-day retreat or weekly planning meeting) to ensure that structured momentum is not lost.

The second phase of this resource planning is implementation and monitoring of the plan itself. This phase can often be managed with less frequent meetings (such as monthly or quarterly) as long as someone is charged with monitoring and communicating progress between meetings.

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have a resource development committee?
- Who serves, or who would we want to serve, on our committee?
- Are members of our board of directors participating on the committee?
- Has the committee taken ownership of the resource development process?
- How often does our committee meet?

If your program is currently funded by large or long-term grants or awards, it is important that you start the process of resource development early in the funding cycle. Some programs don't think about sustainability until that type of funding is about to run out. By then it is often too late to generate sufficient resources to continue the program. The effort your committee makes when you have sufficient funding will better position you to generate the resources needed to continue, and possibly expand, your program's work.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Allison, M., & Kaye, J. (1997). *Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations: A practical guide and workbook*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bernstein, P. (1997). *Best practices of effective nonprofit organizations: A practitioner's guide*. New York, NY: Foundation Center.
- Connors, T.D. (2001). *The nonprofit handbook: Management*, 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## Assessment of Internal Resources

One of the first tasks of your resource development committee is to map out what “internal resources” are available to your program.

Internal resources include the assets that your board members, staff, volunteers, and community partners bring to the table. These resources are most often defined by the connections and contacts your program has in the community. For example:

- ◆ Perhaps one of your board members also serves on the board of a local corporation. That is a connection that your program can later use to seek a donation from the corporation or tap into their employees as a pool of potential volunteers.
- ◆ Your program finds that 25 percent of your volunteers are students from the local university. Perhaps you can use those volunteers to recruit other students on campus, or even form a formal partnership with the student union, a fraternity, or the university administration.
- ◆ Chances are that several of your board members have extensive grant and proposal writing experience. Writing effective grant applications and proposals requires unique skills. These individuals can be resources in applying for government or foundation resources.
- ◆ You may find that one of your staff members serves on the local PTA or is president of the Rotary Club. That may be an invaluable connection in setting up a formal partnership with a school down the road.
- ◆ Perhaps one of your volunteers is a Web designer. Your program might be able to convince them to build your program Web site as an activity to do with their mentee. If you can tap into this resource, you may have saved your program thousands of dollars by not having to hire an outside designer.

These internal resources will greatly influence your resource development plan. If you find that you have no one on your committee with grantwriting experience, you may decide not to go after many grants. You may decide to have several individuals attend a grantwriting seminar or determine that you need to hire an outside grantwriter. Your assessment of internal resources might reveal that your board members have many connections to local businesses. As a result, your development plan may focus on increasing financial and other support from local businesses based on these connections.

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Has our committee mapped out the internal resources at our disposal?
- What connections in the community and skills do our board members, program staff, and volunteers bring to our program?
- How can we use these connections and skills in the creation and implementation of our resource development plan?

Your internal resources are just as important to your program's sustainability as the external sources of funding that you may want to pursue. Mapping these internal resources allows your program to tap into all the resources at its disposal, take advantage of opportunities of which you may not have been aware, and get the most out of the community connections you have spent so much time building.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Allison, M., & Kaye, J. (1997). *Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations: A practical guide and workbook*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bryson, J.M. (1995). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement*, rev. ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

### Web:

- Nonprofit Genie Web site—  
<http://www.genie.org/>

## Assessment of External Resources

In addition to mapping your program's internal resources, your resource development committee should also assess the many external resources you currently have or that may be available to you. When most people think of tapping into external resources, they think of grants, awards, and other direct funding streams. While the acquisition of funding is certainly one result of utilizing external resources, it is important to remember that external support can take many different forms, including in-kind donations and volunteer support. External resources include things that can support all aspects of your program's operations, not just the fiscal strength of the program.

Mapping these external resources gives you the "lay of the land" as to where you are and the directions you may be able to go. Some of the common external resources that resource development committees investigate include:

### ◆ Foundations

There are literally thousands of local, state, and national foundations that offer grants and other financial support that your program may be able to receive. Your local or regional public library, volunteer center, or United Way may have national and state foundation guides that summarize foundation programs, parameters, and application procedures.

### ◆ Government agencies

Local, state, and federal agencies can also offer financial support for your program. Federal grant opportunities can be researched in the *Federal Register*. Be sure to contact state, county, and municipal agencies that may be able to provide support for your program, either through hard dollars or through such things as policies that allow employees to take time off for youth service activities or donation of office space. Do not expect to survive on government support alone,

though, since political priorities and resources fluctuate.

### ◆ Local corporations and businesses

Most large corporations and businesses engage in some form of community outreach. This may be financial support, employee programs that encourage volunteering, or the donation of equipment and supplies. Even smaller businesses may have something to contribute that your program could use. Perhaps a local print shop could produce your flyers at a reduced cost. A local ad agency might be willing to donate some time to help market your program. Perhaps a local law firm would donate some corporate tickets to a basketball game that you could give to mentors and mentees. If you do a good job of selling the value of your program, you may even find several businesses willing to give direct financial support. No matter what form of support you can find from local businesses, it is almost certain to be the result of

### Self-Assessment Questions

- Has our resource development committee mapped out both current and potential external resources?
- Have we looked at receiving support through foundations, government agencies, individuals, local businesses, and special events?
- Are we only looking at financial support, or have we also included the other forms of support we can receive from external sources, such as in-kind donations or volunteer time?
- Did our assessment of external resources give us the "big picture" of where we are?

the one-to-one connections you have made through your community collaborations and outreach. The internal assets your development committee has mapped out can really drive the success of your outreach to the business community.

#### ◆ **Individual support**

Often undervalued and neglected by mentoring programs, individual giving has the potential to be your largest source of revenue and support. A 2001 study found that nearly 90 percent of American households donated to charities in 2000, giving an average amount of \$1,620, or 3.2 percent of their income (Independent Sector, 2002). While some patterns of donation are shifting based on changes in the economic climate, it remains clear that individual giving can be a huge source of support for nonprofits and youth service agencies.

Your program can effectively tap into individual donors by creating a database of past contributors. This helps your program track the money and other donations that come in from individuals and allows you to more effectively market your program.

#### ◆ **Special events**

Fundraising events should also be considered. While fundraising events vary in size and sophistication, there are a few important principles to remember. New fundraising events often start with modest expectation and grow over time. Often these events take a few years to build momentum and community interest. Think about growing your fundraising events slowly over time. Even if you only break even financially, these events may be worthwhile in terms of building community awareness, recruiting groups of mentors, and recognizing and thanking your current mentors and youth.

### Key Resources

#### Print:

- Bryson, J.M. (1995). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement*, rev. ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

#### Web:

- Foundation Center— [www.fdncenter.org](http://www.fdncenter.org)
- Federal Register Online— [http://www.access.gpo.gov/su\\_docs/aces/aces140.html](http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/aces/aces140.html)
- FirstGov for Nonprofits— <http://firstgov.gov/Topics/Nonprofit.shtml>
- The Finance Project— <http://www.financeproject.org>

#### ◆ **Other forms of external support**

Other potential resources your committee may want to investigate include sponsorships, capital campaigns, endowment funds, fees for services, income investments, gifts in-kind, membership dues, e-commerce, product sales, and social entrepreneurship.

Your committee should look at what is currently being accessed by your program across these various resources. They should map out what revenue and other support is currently being obtained in each of these areas. Once the committee has assessed these external resources, they will be able to analyze, compare, and combine them with their assessment of internal resources to give the “big picture” of where your program is regarding its resource development.

## Written Resource Development Plan

Once your committee has mapped your internal and external resources, they will need to analyze that information and develop a written resource development plan that will set the course of action for your sustainability efforts.

This process is more than simply charting your various revenue streams and identifying a few grants to go after. It should be a much deeper look into how you are working toward resource development. There are several things for the committee to consider in analyzing your current status and creating your future plan of action:

### ◆ **Efficacy of previous efforts**

What fundraising and resource development activities have we tried in the past? What worked and what didn't? For example, say your program did a fundraising banquet one year and made little money from it. Is there potential for the event to grow over time? Was the event still beneficial to your program in other ways, such as marketing and volunteer recruitment, in spite of not generating much revenue? Alternatively, what foundations has the program approached in the past and what was the rate of success? As your committee analyzes your current status, they will need to ask these types of questions if they are going to develop an effective plan for future action.

### ◆ **Compatibility with the program's mission and vision and impact on operations**

Are you targeting external resources that are not appropriate based on the program's design, goals, and other financial obligations? Programs get themselves in trouble when they take on funding with expectations and responsibilities that do not support the agency's mission and goals. Programs also experience problems when they expand too fast. Rapid program expansion can have a negative impact on staff, running the risk of lowering

the quality of service in exchange for an increased quantity of matches.

### ◆ **Compatibility with timelines**

When does your current funding run out? When might new grants be available? Mapping out your resources chronologically will help in setting a plan of action.

### ◆ **Scenario planning**

Your committee should plan for multiple scenarios when creating a resource. What if you don't get that big federal grant? What if the economy stagnates and individuals donate less money to charities? What if political priorities shift and current funding is reduced or eliminated? If you

## Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have a written resource development plan?
- Does our plan contain the assumptions it was developed under and the rationale for decisions made?
- Have we planned for many different scenarios?
- Are the timelines, workscope, and objectives of our plan reasonable and appropriate for our program?
- Does our plan assign clear roles and responsibilities for implementing the plan?
- Do the individuals working on our resource development have the necessary skills and experience?
- Have we built a system to track the progress of the plan and to revise it as needed?

decide to focus your efforts on increasing individual giving, does that hurt your program's ability to respond effectively to grant applications? These types of questions can help build a plan that will still be effective in spite of the inevitable changes in resource availability.

#### ◆ **Realistic expectations**

You may find that only 20 percent of your assets come from local businesses. Is it realistic to expect to increase that to 45 percent in two years? Be sure not to set unrealistic expectations for resource development right off the bat. Keep in mind that your plan will take shape over time and will be changing as circumstances change.

As your committee weighs these questions and considerations, it will start to get a clearer picture of the ways your program can improve its resource development. The decisions your committee makes at this point will inform your written resource development plan.

### **Components of the Resource Development Plan**

What a resource development plan looks like in the end is widely varied across programs. Every program's situation is unique and the strategies they employ to ensure sustainability are diverse. But there are some common elements of a written resource development plan that should be included in the one created for your program:

#### ◆ **Assumptions made and rationale for decisions**

It is important that you document the scenarios under which your plan was developed and the reasons decisions were made regarding resource development strategies, goals, and objectives. If your plan assumes that federal grants will not be available, that individual giving is underutilized by

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Allison, M., & Kaye, J. (1997). *Strategic planning for nonprofit organizations: A practical guide and workbook*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Connors, T.D. (2001). *The nonprofit handbook: Management*, 3rd ed. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Jucovy, L. (2001). *Supporting mentors*. Technical Assistance Packet #6. Portland, OR: National Mentoring Center, NWREL.
- Olenick, A.J., & Olenick, P.R. (1991). *A nonprofit organization operating manual: Planning for survival and growth*. New York, NY: The Foundation Center.
- Seltzer, M. (2001). *Securing your organization's future: A complete guide to fundraising strategies*. New York, NY: Foundation Center

### Web:

- "Successful Fund Raising" in NMC Bulletin #8 —<http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/pdf/bull8.pdf>
- Sustaining Program Viability—<http://www.emt.org/userfiles/SustainingViability.pdf>
- Going to Market: Marketing Concepts for Mentoring Programs—<http://www.emt.org/userfiles/GoingMarket.pdf>

your program, and that the acquisition of donor tracking software is vital, then your plan should spell out how those conclusions were reached. This will help your partners, stakeholders, and potential funders understand the course of action you are taking.

#### ◆ **Clear goals and objectives**

Your resource development plan should have established goals and benchmarks. For example, your program may want to increase financial support from local businesses by 15 percent each year. Or have seen it increase by 45 percent at the end of three years. Either way, you have set a goal and a benchmark to measure your progress. You may have the acquisition of a particular grant as a clear goal. Or perhaps increased in-kind donations are a priority. Whatever your goals are, make sure that they are concrete, realistic, measurable, and understood by all the people responsible for implementing the plan.

#### ◆ **Reasonable, clear timeline**

Ideally, you will want to create a two- to three-year plan. Some agencies even plan out five or more years in advance. Even though your plan might change over time, it is important to set a timeline that everyone can follow and that you can use to track your progress.

#### ◆ **Designation of responsibilities**

Resource development is a lot of work and your plan needs to spell out exactly who is responsible for specific tasks. One committee member may be designated to track foundation resources, while another member is responsible for initiating contact with local businesses. Still another member might be charged with building a formal partnership with the local school district. As mentioned

earlier, your plan is of no practical use if nobody owns responsibility for actually implementing it.

#### ◆ **Support systems**

How will you ensure that the resource development plan is being implemented? What resources or skills do your committee members need to carry out the plan? How frequently will your committee meet to discuss progress and revise the plan? These types of questions will need to be addressed in the written plan. Include the ways you will support, track, and update your resource development work in your written plan.

Your written resource development plan, along with your mission statement and policy and procedure manual, is one of the guiding documents for your mentoring program. If your resource development committee has done a good job of mapping resources, and planned for a variety of circumstances that could affect those resources, then your written plan will significantly increase your chances of ensuring the program's long-term sustainability. If it is clearly thought out and properly implemented, it will provide clear direction for your sustainability efforts while remaining flexible enough to allow your program to adapt to changing financial landscapes.

## Foundation #5: Useful Program Evaluation

This section details the importance of evaluating your program's operations and outcomes. While many mentoring programs conduct local program evaluations, other agencies fail to implement this critical foundation for success. Typical reasons agencies give for not conducting evaluations include a lack of resources, failing to see the value of evaluation and, more typically, not feeling skilled or confident in the evaluation design and implementation process. In spite of these excuses, conducting an evaluation is one of the most valuable things a program can do. It can help refine and improve services while also providing key information and statistics that can be used in marketing and increasing funding for the program. Evaluation tells your program's story.

The essential evaluation components you will need to have in place are:

■ **Design and implementation of a local program evaluation**

■ **Use of evaluation data for program enhancement**

***End result:*** By conducting an evaluation your program will operate more efficiently, gain increased marketability, and produce more positive outcomes for youth.

## Design and Implementation of a Local Program Evaluation

If your program is going to be successful over time, you need to conduct an evaluation. A local program evaluation is the only way to really analyze and improve your services and ensure that you are meeting the goals and objectives of your program.

Evaluation can often be labor-intensive, complicated, and confusing. Sometimes programs avoid evaluation simply because they are afraid of what a systematic look at their operations and outcomes might reveal. But if your program is going to ever have a clear understanding of the impact you are making, then evaluation is a necessary program component. The usefulness of evaluation data to your program far outweighs the time and effort that goes into creating it. Most programs find that conducting an evaluation seems much less intimidating once they have a better understanding of the basic process.

There are several steps in the evaluation design and implementation process. This section is not intended to give you a comprehensive guide to setting up your evaluation—there are many resources already out there that provide guidance on evaluation design and structure. Instead, we'll focus on some of the major steps in the process.

### 1. Determine what you want to measure

There are two main areas to focus on when determining what your evaluation will measure: process indicators and outcome indicators.

*Process indicators* measure how effective your program policies and procedures are in the delivery of services. You might want to determine if your volunteer recruitment methods are effective or if your mentors are being adequately trained before being matched. You may want to evaluate whether your match supervision system is effective in keeping matches healthy and happy. Or you may want to examine the impact that your mentor sup-

port efforts are having in terms of volunteer satisfaction. No matter what processes you decide to evaluate, keep in mind that the point is to use the information you gather to improve, streamline, and enhance the services you provide your volunteers and youth.

*Outcome indicators* measure the impact your services have on youth, volunteers, and the community. Your program should review your established goals and objectives when determining what outcomes to measure. What do they indicate that you should be evaluating? If the goal of your program is to reduce teen pregnancy rates, then it doesn't make much sense to be measuring changes in incidents of school violence.

It is important to avoid the mistake of measuring too many outcomes and impact areas in an evaluation. Programs that strive to affect every facet of a child's development are setting themselves up for disappointment. Remember that the research shows that even in the very best mentoring programs, the results are often modest (DuBois, et al., 2002). So focus your evaluation on those modest outcomes that are core to your program goals and objectives.

### 2. Identify the kinds of information, or data, you will need to collect

Once you know the things you want to measure, you will need to determine what the sources of information and data are that can paint the picture of how you are doing. This is where you move from abstract goals, such as "reduced gang activity" to actually figuring out where you might look for the numbers that show gang activity among your youth has been reduced. For example, if one of your program's outcomes is "improved school behavior" you would probably want to look at attendance records, test scores, and incidents of

bullying/fighting/detention, etc. If your program defines something nebulous like “improved life skills” as being a program goal, then what are the concrete things you could measure that would show that? Possibilities might include looking at substance abuse rates, teen pregnancy rates, and juvenile delinquency statistics. Make sure that the data you collect are useful and reflect your program’s desired outcomes.

### 3. Determine who will conduct the evaluation

Basically, a program has two choices here: design and conduct the evaluation internally, or work with an outside evaluator. Many programs choose to work with an outside evaluator in an effort to minimize the impact on program staff and to ensure that the evaluation is professionally and scientifically conducted. While hiring an outside evaluator can be an expensive proposition, programs may avoid these costs by collaborating with a college or university or using an intern or graduate student to design and implement the evaluation.

If a program has the appropriate staffing, it may want to conduct the evaluation internally using program staff time. Although the evaluation process varies in complexity depending on a program’s needs, most local programs have found that by using existing evaluation resources and materials, staff can design and conduct an appropriate and useful evaluation. The famil-

arity your staff has with the youth and volunteers is another asset that an outside evaluator may not bring to the table.

### 4. Adopt, adapt, or develop your data collection instruments

Obviously, your program is going to need to identify data collection forms to gather and organize the data you want. Programs generally use a combination of questionnaires, surveys, and interviews in conjunction with statistics from outside sources (such as school test scores or arrest rates). There are many survey tools currently available that can be adopted or adapted for use in evaluating a mentoring program.

#### Self-Assessment Questions

- Does our program have an evaluation plan that measures both the processes and desired outcomes of our program?
- What are the outcomes that we would want to measure based on our program’s mission and vision?
- What specific data might we collect that shows progress toward those outcomes?
- Would we want to bring in an outside evaluator or could the evaluation be handled by our own staff with the proper resources and guidance?
- Do we have appropriate staffing necessary for data collection and input?
- Are we required to conduct an evaluation as part of a funding requirement?
- Are we already part of a funding-driven evaluation process?
- If so, is that existing evaluation giving our program the information it needs?
- Based on our program design, what is an appropriate timeline for conducting an evaluation?

These instruments do not need to be terribly complicated. They simply need to collect the information you are after. For instance, if one of the program processes you are measuring is your volunteer intake procedure, a short survey for your current mentors on their level of satisfaction with the intake process should get you the information you are after. If one of your outcome indicators is improved self-esteem among the youth in your program, then an existing youth survey tool given at two or more points during the mentoring relationship might show the progress you are looking for.

#### 5. Decide when you will collect the data

Once you have determined what you want to measure and developed appropriate data collection instruments, it's time to actually implement the evaluation. Ideally, you will want to start collecting your evaluation data when youth first enroll in your program to give you a baseline against which to measure progress. This baseline creates a clean division of pre- and post-participation in the mentoring program. If your program is already well established with many ongoing matches, you may want to include mentors and mentees who have been in the program for a while. For these groups, the baseline for measuring progress becomes the first set of data you collect from them during the initial evaluation.

You will also need to determine when you will collect the follow-up data. Mentoring research indicates that programs generally do not see the impact of a mentor's influence until almost a year into the relationship. For this reason, most programs choose to wait six months, and again at one year, to conduct their follow-up measures. The key is to establish a clear timeline and pick data collection points that work for your program.

Following these steps should make the evaluation process better defined, and more focused and useful for your program (and perhaps less intimidating).

#### 6. Analyze your data

The next step in your evaluation is data analysis. You will need to decide if your program is capable of analyzing the data you collect, or if you should

### Key Resources

#### Print:

- Mertinko, E., Novotney, L.C., Baker, T.K., & Lange, J. (2000). *Evaluating your program: A beginner's self-evaluation workbook for mentoring programs*. Potomac, MD: Information Technology International, & Calverton, MD: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.
- National Mentoring Center. (2000). *Strengthening Mentoring Programs Training Curriculum, Module #5: Measuring Outcomes*. Portland, OR: NWREL.
- Saito, R.N. (2001). *What's working? Tools for evaluating your mentoring program*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

#### Web:

- W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook— <http://www.wkkf.org/Pubs/Tools/Evaluation/Pub770.pdf>
- The Program Manager's Guide to Evaluation— [http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/pubs\\_reports/prog\\_mgr.html](http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/core/pubs_reports/prog_mgr.html)

bring in an outside evaluator to assist with interpreting your data. It is important to interpret the data correctly. All of your efforts in collecting accurate data will be minimized if the wrong conclusions are reached about your program's operations and outcomes. And remember that while data analysis often is presented in the form of impersonal numbers, graphs, and charts, this analysis of evaluation data is essential to accurately telling the very human story of your program's impact.

## Use of Evaluation Data for Program Enhancement

The evaluation of both your program's processes and outcomes is the most effective means of improving your services. Without evaluation results your program will not know why relationships are succeeding or failing, why mentors and youth are satisfied or dissatisfied, and why the youth in your program are showing or not showing progress. Evaluation results are the engine that will drive your program changes. A quality mentoring program uses their evaluation to enhance their program across many areas:

### **Improved services to mentors and youth**

This is the most obvious use of evaluation data, but often programs fail to implement change based on evaluation results. Your program should look at your process indicators and see if there are changes that need to be made in your operating procedures or methods of service delivery. If 75 percent of your mentors say that they felt inadequately trained prior to being matched, then it is certainly time to revisit both the amount and content of pre-match training that volunteers receive. If 60 percent of your youth say that it is difficult to contact your staff, then you may need to look at staffing patterns and your procedure for supervising matches. And if the majority of your mentees say that they are unhappy with their mentor, then it is high time to revisit your matching procedure and the types of ongoing support you give to matches.

### **Improved outcomes for youth**

In addition to enhancing operating procedures based on evaluation results, quality programs also use evaluation data to focus on the desired outcomes of the program. For example, say your program has three goals: reduced gang activity, substance abuse, and dropouts. Your evaluation shows that your mentees are less involved in gangs and are not dropping out of school, but their use of alcohol and marijuana has not changed. A quality program will recognize that one of their objectives is not being met and focus

more energy on improving that outcome. The program might consider providing training for youth on substance abuse. Maybe there are youth in the program who need referral to substance abuse counseling services. Perhaps mentors should be trained more thoroughly on talking about drugs and alcohol with their mentees. Maybe the program could achieve better outcomes in this area by partnering with other community agencies that specialize in adolescent substance abuse issues.

If your evaluation data show that you are not meeting your desired outcomes, use that information to spur change within the program's structure. The entire purpose of your program is to provide positive change for youth. So use your evaluation results to focus in on better means of achieving those results.

### **Enhanced marketing of the program**

As previously noted, your evaluation data describe your program's story. This story is invaluable to your efforts to promote your program in the community. If your evaluation shows that you are making a positive impact on the youth in your program, then by all means, share that information!

Your positive outcomes can enhance your volunteer recruitment efforts. Prospective volunteers will be more willing to join your program if they know that your mentoring relationships have proven to make a difference for youth. They may also be swayed by the fact that 90 percent of your volunteers said that they were "very satisfied" by the level of support and encouragement they received from your staff. So be sure to use statistics, charts and graphs, and comments from mentors and mentees that you gathered as part of your evaluation when recruiting volunteers or making presentations.

Your program data may also assist you in recruiting and motivating youth involved in your program. In

some ways, positive evaluation data can act as a subtle reinforcement, convincing youth in the program that they can achieve the same results that other youth have demonstrated. It lets them know that your mentoring program is working for them.

Be sure to put these positive outcomes on your promotional materials as well. You should include statistics and other information showing positive outcomes on your brochures, Web site, flyers, posters, and in your PSAs. Nothing markets your program and increases community awareness better than the positive outcomes drawn from your program's evaluation.

### **Fundraising and sustainability**

Having positive evaluation results will make it easier for your program to attract new resources. Often funding agencies will want to see demonstrated results before investing time and money in a mentoring program. Building your evaluation results into your grant proposals and presentations to potential funders shows that your program is well-designed, effective, and worth funding.

Your evaluation results can also help keep your current funding. Being able to show that your program is meeting its goals and having its desired impact may save you from budget cuts if your school or parent organization must decrease services.

### **Increased community partnerships**

Your evaluation results can also help in building new partnerships with other organizations and individuals in your community. Being able to demonstrate that your program is effective may lead to new partner-

## Self-Assessment Questions

- How can our program use our positive evaluation results to enhance the program?
- Are we using our demonstrated successes to improve our volunteer recruitment, marketing, and fundraising capabilities?
- How can we use our negative evaluation results to implement changes?
- Are we being honest with ourselves about the outcomes of our evaluation?

ships that allow you to expand or enhance your services. Let key stakeholders and community organizations know how well you are doing and see if your current successes can translate into new collaborations that can improve your program.

### **Celebrate your success!**

A final, and perhaps one of the most important uses of your data is to celebrate your successes. There can be no greater reward for the hard work of your program staff, volunteers, mentors, and youth than to see that their efforts are making a difference. Building recognition events around positive youth outcomes will go a long way toward motivating and energizing all the individuals involved in your program.

### **But please, be honest about your results...**

The whole point of conducting an evaluation is to determine what it is you are doing well and what services can be improved. Nothing can be more discouraging to a program than an evaluation that shows breakdowns in processes or outcomes. But it is important that your program is honest with itself about its evaluation results. Don't inflate your numbers to make it seem like your program is having more of an impact than it really is. This will set up

unreasonable expectations in the community and among your stakeholders.

While you should certainly highlight the impact areas where your program is proving to be most successful, be sure to take a long look at areas where the program is coming up short. Use your previous failures to improve the program's future. Don't gloss them over. While you may want the shiny, impressive numbers that can lead to more funding and marketability, keep in mind that your program is about helping youth. If those positive outcomes are truly not there, it's time to implement some changes. But if you can utilize your positive evaluation results to your advantage, while improving your program operations based on areas you have found to be weak, then you are using your evaluation findings properly. Effective programs are always striving for improvement, even while touting their successes.

## Key Resources

### Print:

- Mertinko, E., Novotney, L.C., Baker, T.K., & Lange, J. (2000). *Evaluating your program: A beginner's self-evaluation workbook for mentoring programs*. Potomac, MD: Information Technology International, & Calverton, MD: Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation.
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# **APPENDIX**

- ✓ Checklist of Program Progress
- ✓ Essential Youth Mentoring Reading
- ✓ Recommended Materials Published by the National Mentoring Center
  - ✓ Sample Timeline for New Mentoring Programs

## Checklist of Program Progress

As your program starts to build a solid foundation based on the ideas in this guide, you may want to use the checklist below to gauge your progress. Checking off the items on this list indicates that you are putting the proper components in place to grow a quality, sustainable program.

If your program is already well established, you can use the checklist to gauge the soundness of your current policies, procedures, and organizational structure.

*Note: The design, focus, and structure of your program may mean that some of these components will not be applicable, or will need to be modified to match your specific program structure. Please keep in mind that, in our experience, a disregard for the foundation outlined here is what leads most programs to fail. The more of these boxes you can check, the better off your program will be.*

### Foundation #1: Strong Agency Capacity

#### Written mission statement and program development plan

- Our program has conducted a community needs assessment.
- The results of the needs assessment are incorporated into our program planning and design, especially in the identification of target populations and potential community partnerships.
- Our program has formed an advisory council or steering committee.
- Our program has developed a clear, appropriate mission statement that has been communicated to all stakeholders.
- Our program uses our mission statement to guide the development of policies and program practices.
- Our program has developed a program plan.
- Initial goals and benchmarks have been set for the program.
- Our program plan and accompanying timelines are compatible with our current services and any requirements of funding sources.

#### Strong knowledge of mentoring and youth development research

- Our staff has a solid understanding of youth mentoring research and best practices.
- We have used mentoring research and other supporting literature in the design and implementation of our program.
- Our staff has a solid understanding of youth development principles
- Our program incorporates mentoring research and best practices into our training of volunteers and youth.
- Our program encourages staff to take the time to review new mentoring research as part of ongoing professional development.

**Written policy and procedure manual**

- Our program has developed a written policy and procedure manual.
- Our policy and procedure manual covers all aspects of program operation and provides guidance to staff on how to handle particular situations.
- Our program's policies have been approved by our board of directors and/or advisory council.
- Our program provides an orientation for new staff on contents of the policy and procedure manual.
- Copies of our policy and procedure manual reside in central locations, and are easily accessible for all program staff.
- Our manual is referred to by staff on an as-needed basis.
- Our program has a process in place to regularly review and revise the policy and procedure manual.

**Access to training and technical assistance services**

- Our program is aware of local, state, and national training and technical assistance resources.
- We keep contact information for training and technical assistance providers on file.
- Our program has identified areas of need, as well as the training and technical assistance providers that can address those needs.
- Our program has developed a small in-house resource collection of mentoring research, how-to guides, and other relevant resources.
- Our program encourages staff to network with other mentoring professionals and receive necessary training as part of ongoing staff development.

**Diversity of youth and community being served is reflected in the program**

- Our program understands the connection between diversity and successful volunteer recruitment, fundraising, and marketing.
- Our program has inclusive language in our mission and goal statements, policy and procedure manual, nondiscrimination employment and volunteer policies, and training materials.
- Our program has a diverse board of directors, advisory council, staff, and volunteer base that are representative of the community that we serve.
- Our program regularly conducts staff development activities to ensure that our staff has sufficient cultural competency.
- The topic of diversity is included in the training that we provide for our board, staff, and mentors/mentees.
- Our program has inclusive language and images in all marketing materials (brochures, Web site, posters, flyers, PSAs, etc.)

### **Qualified and trained staff**

- Our program has developed job descriptions for all positions, which include information about minimum background knowledge, skills, prior experience, and other qualifications.
- Our program requires program coordinators to have prior experience or extensive knowledge of youth mentoring and youth development strategies.
- Staff recruitment methods are designed to give our program a wide, diverse selection of candidates.
- Our program screens applicants for both suitability to the position AND issues of safety and liability.
- Our program supports our staff by:
  - Orienting and training new staff members
  - Offering staff development opportunities
  - “Checking in” regularly with key staff members
  - Implementing written professional development plans for each employee that include goals, activities, and objectives, and are reviewed as part of annual performance evaluations.

### **Evidence of agency support (from board or parent agency)**

- The mission and goals of our mentoring program are aligned with the mission and goals of our parent organization.
- Our program regularly updates our board of directors/advisory council on the program’s progress.
- Our staff has some decisionmaking authority within the larger agency.
- Our mentoring program is a permanent fixture in the organizational chart and literature of our parent agency.
- Our mentoring program has been given appropriate space, equipment, and management oversight from the parent organization.
- Our board of directors/advisory council is committed to developing and promoting our program and takes an active interest in our progress.

### **Community awareness of the program**

- Our program understands the connection between our reputation in the community and the achievement of our goals.
- We have developed a process for gauging our community’s perceptions and awareness of our program.
- Our program uses evaluation results or other data as selling points that can enhance the reputation of our organization.
- Our program has created a brand identity.
- Our program utilizes community partnerships and contacts to increase awareness of the program.
- We have developed a marketing plan that increases community awareness through:
  - Print/radio/television/Web media
  - Newsletters to partners and key community members
  - Flyers and brochures
  - Appearances and presentations at local events

- Testimonies from current mentors
- Other methods of inviting the community to be part of our program
- Networking through key community contacts
- Use of evaluation results to highlight program successes
- An assessment tool that examines the effectiveness of our outreach efforts

## Foundation #2: Proven Program Design

### **A written recruitment plan with multiple strategies**

- Our program has developed a written recruitment plan, which includes:
  - Goals for recruitment
  - Potential sources of targeted volunteers
  - A timeline of scheduled activities
  - Designation of program staff responsible for recruitment activities
  - Budget for recruitment efforts
- Our program tailors its recruitment “pitch” to target specific audiences.
- We have a written mentor “job description” that is used in our recruitment efforts.
- Our program makes it a priority to integrate our community partnerships and connections into our recruitment efforts.
- Our recruitment plan is regularly reviewed and revised.

### **Initial orientation for prospective mentors and mentees**

- Our program provides an initial orientation for prospective mentors and mentees.
- Our initial orientation covers the program’s history, mission, and positive outcomes.
- Our orientation also covers qualifications, responsibilities, and obligations of participating in the program.
- Our orientation “sells” who we are and what we do.
- We track who participates in orientations, and have a written procedure for following up with participants.

### **Established mentor/mentee intake procedures**

- Our program has a step-by-step written intake procedure for both volunteers and youth.
- Copies of these procedures are kept in our program’s policy and procedure manual.
- The steps of the procedure are clearly explained to volunteers and youth at several points.
- We have an established tracking system for volunteers and youth as they move through the steps of the intake procedure.
- Our procedures are effective for both customer service and risk management.
- Our intake procedures are regularly reviewed and revised as needed.

### **Appropriate mentor screening procedures**

- Our program has a step-by step written screening procedure.
- Our program has developed a mentor job description that acts as an initial screening tool.
- Our minimum screening requirements are:
  - written application
  - reference checks
  - face-to-face interview
  - criminal background check
- Our volunteer application and other forms collect the initial information we need.
- We have a formal, written interview process with standard questions.
- We keep all applications and screening results on file.
- Our screening process also looks at the non-criminal factors that may render an applicant ineligible or inappropriate for our program.
- We have a written list of disqualifying offenses and mitigating circumstances that mirrors our eligibility policies.

### **Pre-match training for all new mentors and mentees**

- Our program has a written training curriculum for both mentors and mentees.
- Our curriculum addresses the following topics:
  - Program history, mission, and goals
  - Program policies and procedures
  - Mentor and mentee roles
  - Strategies for beginning the match
  - Communication skills
  - Diversity issues
  - Youth development
  - Crisis management
  - Networks of support
  - Child abuse reporting
  - Other topics needed for our specific program
- We have post-training evaluations on file for each mentor and mentee.
- We are able to bring in experts from our community to provide expertise on particular training topics.

### **Established matching procedure**

- Our program has a step-by-step written matching procedure that is followed by all staff members who are making matches.
- We have developed a list of relevant, weighted matching criteria.

- Each mentor and mentee in our program has a comprehensive file that includes their application, reference checks, interview responses, and other information that will assist staff in making an appropriate match.
- Our matching procedure puts the needs of the child first.
- Our program gives a voice to the parent in the matching process.
- Our program prepares mentors and mentees for meeting each other.
- Our initial meeting between matches is structured, with clear goals and objectives.

### **Established procedure for monitoring matches**

- Our program has a step-by-step written procedure for monitoring matches.
- Our program's procedure has a set schedule of when program participants should be contacted.
- Our program has developed appropriate tracking tools and a list of questions to ask during check-ins.
- We have identified staff members who are responsible for monitoring matches and have provided them with any training they may need.
- Program staff members are aware of other community resources and support systems that can help with problems outside the scope of our program.
- Our program has an accessible record-keeping system that keeps track of the progress of the match.
- Our program has a procedure in place for dealing with grievances, communication issues, and other problems that are revealed throughout the monitoring process.

### **Support, ongoing training, and recognition for volunteers**

- Our program offers frequent ongoing training opportunities for our mentors and mentees.
- Our program uses feedback from volunteers and youth to determine the content and scope of ongoing training activities.
- Participants in training sessions fill out evaluations that are kept on file and used to improve the program's training efforts.
- Our program provides mentors with resources, staff involvement, and other types of personalized support on a case-by-case basis.
- Mentors can participate in a facilitated support group or other support systems.
- Our program regularly recognizes and thanks mentors in a variety of meaningful ways.

### **Established match closure procedure**

- Our program has step-by-step written procedures for deciding when to terminate a problematic match.
- Our program has written closure procedures that factor in the many different reasons why a match may end.
- Our procedure provides support and assistance to the youth, the volunteer, and parents/guardians.
- Our program informs mentors, youth, and the youth's family about our policy regarding future contact. This policy is outlined in a written contract that is signed by all parties at the time of closure.

**Stable and appropriate number of matches with a high retention rate**

- Our program is on target to meet, or is currently meeting, our desired number of matches.
- Our program is also meeting any benchmarks for numbers of matches established by outside funding sources.
- Our program evaluation tracks the length and quality of our matches.
- Our program carefully considers the impact on quality of service before deciding to increase the number of matches in the program.

**Foundation #3: Effective Community Partnerships****Effective collaboration with partner organizations**

- Our program has a written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that documents our partner agencies' roles and responsibilities.
- Our program has developed a process to ensure that the obligations of the MOU are met when staff turnover occurs at partner organizations and among our own personnel.
- We have identified a designated contact person at each partner organization.
- All agencies involved in the program are aware of any special obligations related to funding.
- We have developed a process for handling situations in which a partner agency is not fulfilling the obligations agreed upon in the MOU.
- Our program regularly updates partners as to the progress of the program and the fulfillment of roles and responsibilities.

**Collaboration and networking with other local youth-service organizations**

- We have a clear understanding of the services available to youth and families in our community based on our initial needs assessment survey.
- Our program has established informal partnerships with other youth service providers in the community.
- Our program is part of, or has taken a leadership role in developing, a community coalition.
- We regularly refer youth and their families to other services in the community for assistance with needs that are outside the scope of our program.
- We have invited representatives from other youth service agencies to be on our advisory council and/or board of directors.

## Foundation #4: Sustainable Resource Development

### Established resource development committee

- Our program has formed a resource development committee.
- The committee is composed of members of our board, with volunteers, advisory council members, and program staff serving as needed.
- Our committee has taken ownership of planning and conducting our resource development.
- Our committee has established a regular schedule for meeting.

### Assessment of internal resources

- Our resource development committee has mapped out our program's internal resources.
- We have a solid understanding of the connections and skills that our board members, staff, and volunteers bring to our program.
- Our program understands the importance of these internal resources in the creation of our resource development plan.

### Assessment of external resources

- Our resource development committee has mapped out both current and potential external resources.
- We have a solid understanding of the support from foundations, government agencies, individuals, local businesses, and special events that we currently receive and that may be available to us in the future.
- Our assessment of external resources included such things as in-kind donations, volunteers' time, and other non-financial support.

### Written resource development plan

- We have an established, written resource development plan based on an assessment of current and potential resources.
- The plan contains the assumptions it was developed under and the rationale for decisions made.
- In the development of our plan, the committee considered several different scenarios that could change our course of action.
- Our plan has clear goals, objectives, strategies, and timelines that are reasonable and appropriate for our program.
- Our plan assigns clear roles and responsibilities related to our resource development.
- The individuals working on our program's resource development have the necessary skills and experience.
- Our program has implemented a system to track the progress of the plan and to revise it as needed.

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## Foundation #5: Useful Program Evaluation

### Design and implementation of a local program evaluation

- Our program understands the importance of conducting a program evaluation.
- We have identified the processes and outcomes that we would like to measure in our evaluation.
- We have identified the specific data to collect that will show progress toward our desired outcomes.
- Our program has carefully considered whether to use an outside evaluator or our own staff.
- Our evaluation does not conflict or overlap with other evaluations currently being conducted by our parent agency or as a requirement of a funding source.
- We have established a timeline for conducting the evaluation.
- Our evaluation is being implemented and we are collecting and analyzing evaluation data.

### Use of evaluation data for program enhancement

- Our program uses evaluation results to improve our internal systems and procedures.
- Our program uses evaluation results to improve and enhance the desired outcomes for youth.
- Evaluation results are used in marketing the program to prospective volunteers and community partners.
- Evaluation results are used to increase the funding and sustainability of the program.
- Our program interprets and uses our evaluation results honestly.

## Essential Youth Mentoring Reading

Compiled by Michael Garringer

National Mentoring Center houses one of the largest mentoring-specific resource collections in the country. This collection gives NMC staff access to a wealth of mentoring research and literature, as well as books, how-to guides, training curricula, and evaluation tools. This list comprises what our staff considers to be the most useful resources that we turn to when providing assistance to local programs. They can be of great benefit to your program as well. If one of the goals for you, or your program's staff, is to gain a better overall understanding of mentoring research, best practices, and strategies, then these resources are what we consider to be essential starting points.

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Rhodes, J.E. (Ed.). (2002b). *Critical view of youth mentoring*. New Directions for Youth Development No. 93. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Robinson, V. (1992). *Organizing effective school-based mentoring programs*. Alexandria, VA: National Association of Partners in Education.

Saito, R.N. (2001). *What's working? Tools for evaluating your mentoring program*. Minneapolis, MN: Search Institute.

Smink, J. (1999). *Training guide for mentors*. Clemson, SC: National Dropout Prevention Center.

Tierney, J., & Grossman, J.B., (with Resch, N.L.). (2000). *Making a difference: An impact study of Big Brothers/Big Sisters*. (Reissued ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Public/Private Ventures.

United Way of America. (1990). *Partnerships for success: A mentoring program manual*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

Webster, B.E. (2000). *Get real. Get a mentor: How you can get to where you want to go with the help of a mentor*. Folsom, CA: Evaluation Management Training.

Weinberger, S.G. (2000). *My mentor and me: 36 weekly activities for mentors and mentees to do together during the elementary school years*. Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership.

Weinberger, S.G. (2001). *My mentor and me: The high school years. 36 activities and strategies for mentors and mentees to do together during the high school years*. Hartford, CT: Governor's Prevention Partnership, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership.

White, L.T., Patterson, J., & Herman, M.L. (1998). *More than a matter of trust: Managing the risks of mentoring*. Washington, DC: Nonprofit Risk Management Center.

## Recommended Materials Published by the National Mentoring Center

### ***Strengthening Mentoring Programs Training Curriculum:***

- Module 1: Targeted Mentor Recruiting
- Module 2: Screening Mentors
- Module 3: Making and Supporting the Match
- Module 4: Forming and Maintaining Partnerships
- Module 5: Measuring Outcomes
- Module 6: Marketing and Fundraising
- Module 7: Preparing to Facilitate
- Module 8: JUMPstarting Your Mentors
- Module 9: Connecting and Communicating
- Module 10: Keeping the Relationship Going

### **Technical Assistance Packet Series:**

- Technical Assistance Packet #1: The ABCs of School-Based Mentoring
- Technical Assistance Packet #2: Mentoring Sexual Minority Youth
- Technical Assistance Packet #3: Recruiting Mentors: A Guide to Finding Volunteers to Work With Youth
- Technical Assistance Packet #4: Building Relationships: A Guide for New Mentors
- Technical Assistance Packet #5: Training New Mentors
- Technical Assistance Packet #6: Supporting Mentors
- Technical Assistance Packet #7: Same & Cross-Race Matching
- Technical Assistance Packet #8: Measuring the Quality of Mentor-Youth Relationships

### **Other NMC Materials:**

- Generic Mentoring Program Policy and Procedure Manual
- Quarterly NMC *Bulletin*

*[Electronic copies of all NMC materials are available free of charge to mentoring programs around the world via the NMC Website at [www.nwrel.org/mentoring/publications](http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring/publications). Programs and individuals in North America can order print copies by calling the Center at 1-800-547-6339 x-135, or by sending an email to [mentorcenter@nwrel.org](mailto:mentorcenter@nwrel.org).]*

## Sample Timeline for New Mentoring Programs

If your program is just starting out, this chart provides you with a rough timeline of when your program should begin implementing many of the best practices and program components outlined in this guide. Because of the wide variety of designs and structures in mentoring programs, you may have many of these pieces in place already, may prioritize some of them differently, or find that some of these components do not apply to the way your program is structured. This chart is meant to be a generic outline of what the first year, and beyond, might look like for your program.

### INITIAL PLANNING OF PROGRAM – 3 MONTHS

- Review youth mentoring research and literature.
- Conduct a community needs assessment.
- Form an advisory council or steering committee.
- Identify the youth you wish to serve and potential groups of mentors to target.
- Establish formal and informal partnerships with other community organizations and key stakeholders.
- Confirm that the program's parent agency (if applicable) is ready to provide appropriate support in the form of space, equipment, and administrative staff time as needed.
- Make sure that formal partners have a clear understanding of the program and any requirements or obligations related to funding sources.
- Have all former partners sign an MOU.
- Develop a mission statement and long-range plan.
- Begin designing the program's structure and operational procedures.
- Hire a program coordinator and other key staff.
- Provide any necessary training for new staff to ensure that they have necessary skills.
- Begin developing your policy and procedure manual.
- Develop volunteer applications and other necessary forms.

- Establish your procedures for conducting background checks, applicant interviews, and other steps in the volunteer intake and screening process.
- Begin developing your volunteer recruitment plan focused on your specific target groups of mentors and youth.
- Begin developing your mentor and youth pre-match training materials.
- Develop a list of training and technical assistance providers who may be able to help you get the program going.
- Begin networking with other local, regional, and national mentoring agencies and technical assistance providers.
- Start planning for your program evaluation.

### 3 MONTHS – 6 MONTHS

- Finish development of your volunteer and youth training materials and prepare staff to deliver trainings.
- Develop your procedures for monitoring matches and supporting volunteers.
- Implement the first steps of your volunteer recruitment plan by doing presentations for prospective groups of mentors, launching your marketing campaign, and accepting applications.
- Begin active recruitment and intake of youth into the program.
- Begin delivering orientation sessions for prospective mentors and youth.
- Start accepting mentor applications.
- Conduct background checks, interviews, and other screening procedures for volunteer applicants.
- Conduct pre-match training for approved mentors and youth.
- Begin making matches between mentors and youth.
- Begin collecting data for any evaluation being conducted.
- Form your resource development committee.
- Review program staffing and resource needs.

## 6 MONTHS – ONE YEAR

- Continue to recruit mentors and youth.
- Revise and update your recruitment strategy as needed.
- Revise and update your policy and procedures manual as needed.
- Supervise your mentor/mentee matches through your established monitoring procedure.
- Begin providing ongoing training and support for mentors and youth.
- Establish a resource development committee.
- Continue collecting evaluation data; ensure that data are being properly entered.
- Inform stakeholders, partners, and other interested parties of the progress of the program.
- Review program progress to this point and see if the program's mission, goals, and objectives are being met.
- Access training and technical assistance as needed.
- Review program staffing and resource needs.

## ONE YEAR – AND BEYOND (ONGOING PROGRAM TASKS)

- Build and maintain informal community partnerships.
- Implement a resource development plan featuring multiple approaches for long-term financial sustainability.
- Continue to recruit, screen, train, match, monitor, and support program participants.
- Provide recognition of volunteers.
- Revise policies, procedures, and training materials as needed.
- Review staff development needs and offer training or other support for staff as needed.
- Compile initial evaluation findings.
- Analyze the status and operating procedures of the program based on the initial evaluation findings.
- Access training and technical assistance services from local, state, or national mentoring organizations.

- Keep agency board of directors and program advisory council informed and engaged in program activities.
- Review program staffing and resource needs.

## **NATIONAL MENTORING CENTER**

**Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory**

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1-800-547-6339

**[www.nwrel.org/mentoring](http://www.nwrel.org/mentoring)**

**[mentorcenter@nwrel.org](mailto:mentorcenter@nwrel.org)**