

# *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*, Fourth Edition

## Frequently Asked Questions



**MENTOR**  
THE NATIONAL MENTORING PARTNERSHIP

### **What is the *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*?**

The *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™* (*Elements*) is a collection of research-informed practices for youth mentoring programs. It promotes overall program quality and strong mentoring relationships by recommending evidence-based Standards with Benchmarks that programs can implement in delivering services, as well as many Enhancements that can additionally promote strong outcomes. It also offers recommendations on program management, leadership, evaluation, and core principles and values for youth mentoring organizations.

### **Who developed the *Elements*?**

The *Elements* have been produced by MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership for the past 25 years. The Fourth Edition was produced in collaboration with Dr. Jean Rhodes of the Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring (CEBM) at UMASS-Boston and Drs. Janis Kupersmidt and Rebecca Stelter of Innovation Research & Training (IRT). Michael Garringer and Tammy Tai of MENTOR joined these researchers in developing, writing, and editing this Fourth Edition.

The authors reviewed over 400 journal articles and research reports in conceptualizing this edition, with a special emphasis on new research released in the six years after the release of the previous Third Edition. The draft Benchmarks and Enhancements were also reviewed and approved by an Advisory Committee of practitioners, *Mentoring Partnership* leaders, and additional researchers.

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### **How are the *Elements* used?**

The *Elements* have traditionally been used by the youth mentoring field in a variety of ways:

- Programs around the country (and around the world) use the *Elements* to design and strengthen the practices they use in implementing their mentoring services, treating the publication as a roadmap to program quality and alignment with the latest research.
- Funders and policymakers use them to draft grantee requirements and ensure that their mentoring investments are built on a solid programmatic foundation.
- Training and technical assistance providers use them in coaching and professional development opportunities as an essential resource to increase programs' capacity and use of evidence-based practices.
- Evaluators and researchers use them as guideposts for how to measure the quality and fidelity of program implementation and as potential moderators of program outcomes.

The main *Elements* publication contains information on how individual mentoring programs might apply the Standards, Benchmarks, and Enhancements of the *Elements* to their own work.

### **Why are the *Elements* important for mentoring programs?**

MENTOR strongly believes that youth mentoring programs are most effective at producing positive outcomes and protecting youth safety when they adhere to research-based or research-informed best practices. The Fourth



Edition of the *Elements* is designed to help programs achieve both of these goals. It offers a state-of-the-art set of Standards and practices for mentoring programs that builds on the full history of mentoring research, as well as on promising recent innovations. We believe the *Elements* provide the foundation for improving the value, outcomes and sustainability of youth mentoring programs.

Each program will need to determine how they can best adhere to these practices and whether they should adopt additional or different practices to support their work.

### **How widely accepted are the *Elements*?**

The *Elements* are widely accepted in the United States as the defining document on programmatic standards for the youth mentoring field. Many federal, state, and municipal agencies have referenced these standards in their funding opportunities over the last 15 years. Private funders have also used the *Elements* as the basis for programmatic decisions, as well as for evaluating fidelity of program implementation and assessing overall program quality. The *Elements* and the practices they promote have also been widely examined in major research studies of mentoring programs and have been shown to be important predictors of positive outcomes for youth.

Many other nations—including Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—have used MENTOR’s *Elements* as the basis for their own national standards. Over the past 25 years this publication has truly had a global impact on the quality and scope of youth mentoring.

### **Is there training or other support available to programs in adopting the *Elements*?**

Yes! MENTOR and our network of affiliate *Mentoring Partnerships* offer a variety of training and technical assistance opportunities to the field, most of which support adoption and implementation of the *Elements* and best practices:

- Any mentoring program nationwide can request free training and technical assistance through the National Mentoring Resource Center (NMRC), which is operated by MENTOR with generous support from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Our *Mentoring Partnerships* provide services in all 50 states under this contract.
- Additionally, our *Mentoring Partnerships* provide a wealth of other professional development opportunities, resources, and consultation to programs in their states or regions. Please visit our website at [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org) to see a listing of our *Mentoring Partnerships* across the nation.
- MENTOR staff, along with a national cadre of consultants and subject matter experts, are also available to support large-scale initiatives and projects on a consulting basis, including integration of the *Elements* into their design, implementation, and evaluation.
- MENTOR’s Center for Evidence-Based Mentoring, led by Dr. Jean Rhodes and supported by UMass-Boston, offers excellent summaries of new research and provides a wealth of information related to best practices and using research to build stronger programs.
- MENTOR’s monthly Collaborative Mentoring Webinar Series (CMWS) frequently covers topics related to the *Elements*.
- The National Mentoring Summit, convened by MENTOR each January, holds a number of sessions touching on topics related to the *Elements*.

### **What does it mean if my program doesn’t comply with all of the *Elements*?**

MENTOR believes that the Benchmarks detailed in the *Elements* are achievable by almost every mentoring program and that they truly represent the best information our field has about how to build quality services and foster strong, impactful mentoring relationships between mentors and the nation’s youth. We offer a range of training and technical assistance opportunities to help programs achieve the Benchmarks.



We recognize that not all programs will be able to comply with all of the Benchmarks, Enhancements, and recommendations in the *Elements*. In fact, certain types of programs, such as group mentoring programs and online mentoring programs may need to adjust or rethink many of the practices here, which are primarily derived from research on one-to-one community and school-based programs. Mentoring programs will need to consider how to apply these practices to their work and where they may need to make modifications.

**How frequently are the *Elements* updated?**

MENTOR and its research partners continually monitor the latest research developments in youth mentoring and assess the impact on the *Elements*. Our objective is to produce an updated edition when there is a substantial body of research that adds to the best practices. We are exploring the potential of issuing a bi-annual “refresh” of the current edition as meaningful research emerges. We will also likely release additional evidence-based best practice documents that speak to the unique needs of certain models of programs (e.g., group or peer mentoring) or for serving specific groups of mentees (e.g., youth in foster care or juvenile offenders) in the years to come.

**How can I get copies of the *Elements*?**

PDF versions of the main *Elements* publication, as well as a companion “checklist” of the Benchmarks and Enhancements, can be [downloaded](#) on the MENTOR website.

Print copies of the *Elements* products can be ordered by calling MENTOR at 617-303-4600.