

Training and Support for Success Mentors

A Practical Guide for Program
Coordinators Implementing the
Success Mentors Model



A special thanks to Abby Lormer, Darrin Person, Delia Hagan, Derald Davis, Dudney Sylla, Jean Lahage Cohen, Kilian White, and Whitney Baker, for their extraordinary efforts in making this guide a reality.

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INTRODUCTION



photo credit: Kansas City Public Schools

The Success Mentors Model has been launched in 30 diverse communities across the nation to promote student attendance, engagement and success, and to address chronic absenteeism so all students can get to school and benefit from school. Mentor training and support is critical to the success of mentoring programs, and to ensuring that mentors have a positive impact in the lives of the young people they serve.

This guide is intended to be used as a supplement to the [Every Student, Every Day Success Mentor Implementation Guide](#), which details the steps in the process of launching a Success Mentors Program in your school or district in order to address or prevent chronic absenteeism. This document expands upon the implementation guide by providing more detailed information, tools and resources for you to use to train and support your Success Mentors throughout the program year. It is oriented toward Success Mentors program coordinators who are tasked with training and supporting mentors (in addition to recruiting, screening and matching them with mentees!).

INTRODUCTION

This guide provides a timeline for mentor training and support by season, starting in the spring of the year prior to program launch and continuing through the end of the program year the following spring. It lists the steps that a program coordinator should take in each season of the year to ensure that mentors are trained and supported, so they can be effective in their roles and build strong, supportive relationships with their mentees. It also provides tips and templates to help you organize key events throughout the year - including a mentor orientation, training, and support session. Use these tips, tricks and resources to create a customized mentor training and support plan that meets the needs of your mentors and students. Your timeline and program model may differ from what you see in this guide, and that's okay! Each program will be different—this guide simply offers recommendations and examples to help you get started.

It's important to note that this guide is focused on the mentor's experience in your program, from recruitment to the end of the program year. However, communicating and supporting youth and families is also key to your program's success. There are tips related to supporting mentees and engaging families throughout the guide, but for more information about supporting youth and their families, we recommend you review the [*Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™*](#).

Timeline for Success Mentor Training and Support



INTRODUCTION

In addition to the tips you will find in this guide, we have also provided links to online tools, customizable templates, and documents to support you further. You will see these documents referenced throughout the guide, and you can find a full list of these materials on the last page.

After reviewing this guide, if you are interested in getting more help and guidance to train and support your mentors, we recommend that you apply for no-cost training and technical assistance from the [OJJDP National Mentoring Resource Center](#) (NMRC). The NMRC is intended to equip mentoring program staff with the information, support and coaching to implement programs that are aligned with evidence-based practices for mentoring.

Why Is Training and Supporting Mentors So Important?

Research suggests that inadequate support is one of the top reasons for unplanned early mentoring relationship closure. And negative experiences with mentoring can do more harm than good to young people. Through training and support activities, we can equip mentors with the skills to build strong, supportive relationships with youth, and help them identify and overcome challenges that could lead to early closure.

General Resources

Here are some resources that will be referenced throughout the guide and will be useful as you start setting up your program:

- [Every Student, Every Day Success Mentor Implementation Guide](#)
- [National Student Attendance, Engagement and Success Center website](#)
- [School Checklist for Developing and Launching a Success Mentors Program](#)
- [MENTOR MBK Success Mentors webpage](#)
- [Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™](#)
- [OJJDP National Mentoring Resource Center: Request Technical Assistance](#)

SPRING



Photo credit: Midlands Mentoring Partnership

OVERVIEW

Early spring is a key time to design and plan your program for the coming year. There are many components to an effective Success Mentors program that you'll be tasked with, from recruiting and training mentors, to matching and supporting mentoring relationships, to connecting students and families to needed resources and responding to attendance challenges. These are some key steps to take at this point in the year.

INTERNAL MEETING

- Early Spring -

Early spring is a great time to meet with your team to address the following key components of your program's structure for the coming year.

1. Solidify your program's staffing structure and identify your team

Success Mentors programs require buy-in and collaboration across your school system. They also require a designated staff person to coordinate all aspects of the program. Identify the major players at your school who will need to be involved in your program, and what their role will be, so everyone is on the same page for the coming school year. You can find more information about this in the [Every Student, Every Day Success Mentor Implementation Guide](#).

Some key questions to ask yourself and your team include:

- *Does your school have a designated attendance team?*
- *How will the principal support this effort? Will they be involved in data meetings? How else can they champion the program and ensure that all key staff understand the goals of the program?*
- *How much of the program coordinator's time will be dedicated to this program? The NMRC's [Staffing Calculator for Match Support](#) can help you estimate the right staff time for all these different tasks, depending on how many youth you hope to serve this year. Refer to [Success Mentors Coordinator Training](#) for more information on training staff.*

SPRING

2. Develop recruitment plans for mentors and students/families

Recruiting both mentors and students for your program will begin in the spring, so it is important to use this time to plan all steps of the process.

3. Developing a Data Meeting Structure

Check out the [Every Student, Every Day Success Mentor Implementation Guide](#) for guidance on how to set up effective data meetings between school attendance teams, Success Mentors and, if possible, community partners who can provide additional support and social services to students and families in need. The Implementation Guide also has resources to ensure that confidentiality and data agreements are in place to facilitate partnerships with outside organizations, to protect students' private information while enabling effective coordination. This is a great time of year to put together an agenda for these meetings and ensure that the school's attendance team or principal is ready to schedule and lead these meetings once the next school year begins.

Spotlight on: Recruitment

The next section will go in depth about your Mentor Orientation, which is your opportunity to introduce the program to potential mentors. This is something you will want to advertise at staff meetings, in employee newsletters, through flyers posted on bulletins in staff spaces, and through other relevant means, to reach as many school staff as possible who might serve as mentors.

You can also send out invitations to specific staff members who you feel would be a good fit for the program. Asking staff directly, instead of leaving it up to chance, could increase participation as they may feel selected or chosen for a special opportunity. Be sure that you are including all school staff who could serve as great mentors, not just teachers. For example administrative support staff paraprofessionals, custodial staff, food service staff, and school administrators should all be regarded as potential mentors as well.



Image credit: Midlands Mentoring Partnership

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INTERNAL MEETING: Recruitment **- Early Spring -**

Recruitment for Mentors:

Recruitment will last through the spring until orientation (described in the next section), and may be extended into the early fall if additional mentors are needed when the school year begins. No-cost technical assistance from the NMRC can also help you develop a recruitment plan for mentors and mentees. Prior to your orientation you'll want to read this full guide and get a sense of how you'll be engaging with mentors throughout the school year so you can give them a sense of the expectations for their involvement during the orientation session.

Recruitment for Students/Mentees:

Make sure your school has the ability to track student attendance on an individual basis, and work to identify those students who were chronically absent in the current school year. This generally places them at risk for chronic absence in the upcoming school year. Once you have identified these students, you should reach out to them and their families via letter and phone as well as have in-person discussions to help them understand the goals of the program, determine their interest, answer any questions they have, and prepare them to get started.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TIP: **Recruiting Mentees and Families**

In these conversations, be sure to acknowledge that students and families are doing their best, and remember that parents and caregivers generally want what's best for their children. Share that mentoring is an opportunity their child can take advantage of to get the support to achieve their goals next year, rather than a punitive measure – who would want to participate in a mentoring program like that?

It's always great to share positive reasons why a student would be a great fit for your program!

SPRING

ORIENTATION

- Late Spring -

A mentor orientation, or information session, can be a first step for sharing information about the mentoring opportunity with school staff, including teachers, administrators and support staff. Here is some key information to cover in an orientation session.

1. Inform potential mentors and school staff why the school cares about mentoring:

- Share how and why mentoring can help address issues with attendance within the school. Sharing that this model is [evidence-based](#) might inspire and promote confidence in potential volunteers.
- Share the program's goal of building a sense of belonging for students and families in the school environment through frequent, strengths-based interactions and responsiveness to student and family needs.
- This is your chance to acknowledge that many school staff are already mentoring students informally, and share why mentoring a student in a more structured way can benefit the potential mentor, the students, and the school community as a whole. Be both realistic and positive! While the intention is to attract mentors, it is also a critical time to ensure they have realistic expectations about what it will be like to mentor a student.

2. Provide an overview of the role of mentor, time commitment, and other expectations:

- Share a high level overview of a mentor's experience, from having an interview to determine a mentor's fit for the program, to being matched with a student in the fall, to reaching out and getting to know them and their families, to attending a kickoff event and other "match" events and mentor support meetings throughout the year.
- Share what's involved: If mentors are required to attend a weekly attendance meeting, or if they will rotate that responsibility, share that info up front. Talk about the number of recommended contacts with the student each week (generally at least 3) and what will be required in terms of staying in touch with the program coordinator about how things are going, including attending mentor support events and match activities.

Make sure to let orientation attendees know how you plan to stay connected with them over the summer if they do plan to volunteer, and when they should expect to be matched up with a student in the fall.

SPRING

ORIENTATION: Screening **- Late Spring -**

The primary goal of your orientation session is to share information about the program for the purposes of recruiting mentors, but here are some tips on how you can use this event as part of your screening process. Screening is about more than background checks and fingerprinting (which should already be done for existing school staff); it's also about determining if a prospective mentor has the right mindset, attitudes, beliefs and skills to be successful, or if they seem capable of learning these through training.

- 1. Provide a sign-up sheet for short interviews for people interested in moving forward.**
 - Let prospective mentors know that this is the next step in the process! It is an opportunity for them to learn more about the program one-on-one, and for you to ask some questions to make sure the program is a good fit for them.
- 2. Tell attendees up front that you are looking for individuals who:**
 - Have a positive view of students
 - Will be encouraging and supportive
 - Work to build authentic and respectful relationships



Photo credit: Kansas City Public Schools

Spotlight on: Guest Speaker

If this isn't your program's first year, and you have a current mentor who can speak about their experience, have them share their story, and let potential mentors ask questions. It is a good idea to select someone who is not only committed to the program, but will also be honest about the pros and cons surrounding the role.

SPRING

ORIENTATION: Screening

- Late Spring –

- 3. If you noticed that a participant had a negative reaction to the things you shared about the program, you might make a note of this and bring it up at their interview. Consider if they are really a good fit to support a student and their family in a strengths-based way if they:**
 - Are showing judgement in a way that feels unproductive
 - Appear to not have enough time for the program
 - Appear too stressed by what they are hearing
- 4. Think about sending out a digital survey after the event to get more information from the people that attended. You can ask questions like:**
 - Are you interested in moving forward?
 - What is your reason for wanting to be a mentor?
 - Do you have any questions about the program?

For mentors who are interested in supporting your program but don't necessarily have the time or aren't a good fit, try to find other ways for them to support your program. They can help by recruiting other mentors, helping out with a match event, or join the support staff team.

SPRING

Quick Resources

Resources to help you prepare for your role as Program Coordinator:

- [Coordinator Training Evaluation](#)
- [Coordinator Training Facilitator's Guide](#)
- [Coordinator Training Run of the Show](#)
- [Coordinator Training Template \(slideshow\)](#)

More on Mentor Recruitment and Screening

- [Starting a Youth Mentoring Program: Recruitment](#)
- [Starting a Youth Mentoring Program: Screening](#)

SUMMER



Photo credit: Midlands Mentoring Partnership

OVERVIEW

The summer is your time to prepare for the program launch! Make sure you have all your documentation and materials ready to go, from parent permission forms, to mentor training materials, to printed handouts with program policies and procedures.

PROGRAM PLANNING

Fall will be busy, so summer is a great time to start preparing for the tasks to come when the school year begins, including:

- Selecting participating students and reaching out to families
- Mentor training
- Kickoff event

Spotlight on: Technical Assistance

The program planning stage is a great time to apply for technical assistance (TA)! Connect with an expert in the mentoring field to help you coordinate all the different steps and parts of your program. Learn more here:

- [Click here to request TA](#)
- [Success Mentors Request Template](#)

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TIP: Letters Home

If you mail invitations to families for the program prior to school starting, include a permission form for students to participate. Follow this up when school starts with a phone call home. Strengths-based language is critical for these letters and calls, so have those messages prepared. Let families know when they should expect to hear from their child's mentor, and reiterate that the mentor's job is to support the student in partnership with the family.

FALL



Photo credit: MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership

OVERVIEW

The Fall is a busy season as your program gets started and the mentoring relationships begin! Here is an overview of the major tasks you will be thinking about, in the order you should think about them!



Spotlight on: Matching

When matching youth and mentors, make sure you are taking each party's preferences into account. Also consider the context of a match. You can match a pair who know each other already, but should NOT to pair a student with someone is who their current teacher. Make sure mentors and mentees are informed individually about who their mentor and mentee is before they are introduced, so you have the opportunity to process any concerns. First, you want to inform the mentor about the student that they've been matched with, and make sure they are feeling comfortable and interested in being matched with this student. This is because you don't want to disappoint a student whose mentor pulls out of a match after they've already been told about it. Then, find out if the student is comfortable with the mentor. If they aren't, process why that is, and work to find a solution or, if necessary, a different mentor.

You may also have multiple students matched with one mentor in either small groups or one-to-one formats, so if mentees are expected to interact with other students in a group, be sure to make them aware of this as well. Once everyone has been notified of their match and is comfortable, a match event can help kickoff these connections in a positive way.

MENTOR TRAINING

- September -

Training your mentors equips them with the skills they need to successfully build relationships with students. You may choose to have another mentor info-session right after school starts, and then invite all of your mentors (recruited last spring and this fall) to the training once you have “accepted” them (after their interview determined they are a fit) but before they are matched.

What Should a Mentor Training Cover?

1. **Opportunities to consider motives and goals, and manage expectations**

Training should give mentors the opportunity to reflect on their own experiences with mentors, and to define what a mentor is and is not.

2. **The “life cycle” of a mentoring relationship**

Give mentors an idea of common milestones in a mentoring relationship, and what to expect at each stage, from getting to know each other to mentoring relationship closure. Validate the experiences and challenges that mentors might expect to have at each of these stages.

3. **Effective relationship-building frameworks**

Engage mentors in a discussion about how to build strong and meaningful relationships with youth. You may want to include the Search Institute’s [developmental relationships framework](#), and talk about strategies for building trust and getting to know students. Be sure to also talk about what it means to be strengths-based in conversations with students and their families, and how to be youth-centric (provide opportunities for youth voice and choice) when setting goals.

4. **Guidance on how to engage with parents and caregivers**

Coach your mentors on how often they should reach out to parents and caregivers, and how to do this in a way that builds relationships. Encourage mentors to reach out with good news, let parents know they are enjoying getting to know their child, and ask about ways the school can support them in getting to school.

5. **Safety and ethical decision-making**

What should mentors do if they become aware of something unsafe going on in their mentee’s life? Be sure to go over protocols and ways to address sensitive issues or safety concerns that may come up. Remind mentors to inform mentees that they will keep what they tell them private unless they share that something unsafe is happening, in which case they will need to get help.

MENTOR TRAINING - September -

What Should a Mentor Training Cover? (cont'd)

5. Cultural competence

Cultural competence begins with understanding one's own racial identity and innate biases, and how these shape one's worldview. It is essential that mentors are clear about how they define their own identities, and what kinds of biases and perspectives they are bringing into their relationships. Teach mentors how to avoid making assumptions about individuals based on generalizations or past experiences (MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership, [Guide to Mentoring Boys and Young Men of Color](#), 2017). For more on cultural competence, check out *Critical Mentoring: A Practical Guide*, by Torie Weiston-Serdan or *The Dreamkeepers* by Gloria Ladson-Billings.

6. Program expectations

Be sure to go over the expectations of mentors, including their attendance at data meetings and how frequently you expect them to check in with you.

7. Challenges

Give mentors the opportunity to share some of the challenges they anticipate, and help one another troubleshoot and prepare. There is likely much insight and experience already in the room, so be sure to give mentors the opportunity to help one another in a supported way.

See the Quick Reference list at the end of this section for tools and resources to support you in designing your own mentor training (this can also be a great thing to request TA for from the NMRC).

Spotlight on: Check-ins for Mentors

It is important to establish regular check-ins with your mentors. This helps build the relationship and inform you if the match is struggling and needs support! Here are some tools for setting up regular check-ins with your mentors:

- [Using Text Messaging to Support Success Mentors](#)
- [Ongoing Support and Supervision – Mentor Feedback](#)

FALL

KICKOFF EVENT

- September/October -

Kickoff events can be impactful for building a cohesive community across mentors and mentees, building program pride, and starting matches off strong. This event can be either a casual gathering where everyone can just hang out, or a more structured event with activities and programming. Regardless, this is an opportunity to give everyone involved in the program a chance to connect.

GOALS

- 1. Get mentors and mentees excited about the program and their relationships.**
 - You want to have an attractive program name, and giving out t-shirts or other “program flair” for your matches will help them get excited about their involvement in the program.
- 2. Create opportunities to build connections.**
 - Provide a mix of group and on-on-one activities. This will give your mentors and mentees an opportunity to get to know one another while building community and connections with other students and supportive staff.
- 3. Prepare them for what’s next!**
 - Share if there will be other events throughout the year that mentors and mentees can get excited about, and help everyone get a sense of what their time in the program will be like.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT TIP: Info Session for Parents/Guardians - September -

It's important for families to connect with the mentor and build a relationship with them as well. Consider inviting parents and caregivers to an informal gathering, perhaps for coffee and donuts in the morning at a drop-off spot, where mentors and families can say hello and maybe get a pamphlet/folder with info about the program and next steps.

Success Mentors Meet & Greet

We are excited for your student to participate in the Success Mentor Program. Through this relationship, the goal will be to support the student and their family in improving school attendance.

Please join us on **DATE** at **TIME** in the **LOCATION**. Students and families will have an opportunity to meet their Success Mentor and enjoy refreshments together!

Photo credit: Midlands Mentoring Partnership

FALL

Sample Agenda for a Kickoff Event

- 1. Welcome Address** – Have the principal or district leader welcome and congratulate mentors and mentees on their decision to enroll in this year’s program, and share his or her pride in program participants.
- 2. Group Activity** – This is a great way to break the ice and build some group pride and cohesion before mentors and mentees break into their pairs or small groups. Check out some options below from the [NYC Department of Youth & Community Development’s Activities Catalog for Mentors and Mentees](#), which can be accessed in the attached resource list.
- 3. Find your pairs/groups** – Mentors and mentees should already know who they are matched with. Whether they are matched one-to-one or in small groups, plan a fun activity that allows them to connect and get to know each other. One example – give each pair or small group a bag of M&Ms. Have them take turns closing their eyes and choosing an M&M, and sharing something about themselves based on the color they choose. You can use this code:
Blue = Something that irritates you
Red = Something you’re passionate about
Orange = Someone you admire
Yellow = Something you’re good at
Green = Something on your “bucket list”
- 4. Program Expectations** – Review the expectations of the program, including how often matches should meet and when, how they can contact each other, how long the program lasts, and what happens at the end of the program (do matches continue and under what circumstances, how can they stay in touch, etc.)
- 5. Wrap Up/Reflection Activity** – Have mentors and mentees wrap up by sharing one goal they have for their year, that the other can support them with. This can be a fun personal goal such as improving their jump shot, or an academic goal like improving their math grade. The important thing is that the goal comes from the student, and that the mentor shares a goal too!

STAND UP/SIT DOWN

DESCRIPTION: Middle School & Up

This game is a great icebreaker so people can see things they might have in common with others—or differences! Have everyone seated in a circle. Ask them to stand up if they fit the question and then ask them to sit down.

Ex: Stand up if you like hip-hop. Ok thanks, please be seated. Then go to the next question. Feel free to make up your own questions!

- Stand if you like to cook.
- Stand if you like to work out.
- Stand if you want to go to college.
- Stand if you know how to swim.
- Stand if you like to watch scary movies.
- Stand if you like broccoli
- Stand if you like to sleep late.
- Stand if you like the Yankees.
- Stand if you know what you want your career to be.
- Stand if you have brothers or sisters.
- Stand if you are a twin.
- Stand if you know how to juggle.

CODES TO LIVE BY

DESCRIPTION: High School

In this lesson we documented our own list of mottoes/ codes to live by. Mentors were invited to create a list of ethics/codes they live by that could be expressed as clichés.

One mentor brought his list of 10 sayings in and I cut it up into 10 strips and passed each saying around so that the mentees could read it out loud to the rest of the group.

As each was read out, I facilitated a reflection of what they thought each meant and whether or not they related to it (raise your hand if you agree/ disagree why).

After sharing all of them, I asked them to guess which mentor wrote it. Hands raised, I took a few guesses, and then I shared the correct answer.

They then had a chance to sit for 5 minutes and brainstorm any phrases of life/ mottoes they have heard before and could relate to. They shared it back to the circle and in the same manner, were invited to break it down into examples, etc.

Here is one mentor’s list:
*You reap what you sow; you always get what you give; what goes around comes around
Never short-hand yourself; ultimately, we control our own destiny.
Write a new poem every week*

Image credit: MENTOR New York

FALL

Quick Resources

Family Orientation

- [Orientation – General – Orientation Plan](#)
- [Orientation – Mentor FAQ](#)
- [Orientation – Mentor – Guidelines Code of Conduct](#)
- [Orientation – Mentor – Procedures – Confidentiality](#)
- [Mentees, Parents and Guardians – Mentee Roles and Responsibilities worksheet](#)
- [Mentees, Parents and Guardians – Orientation agenda](#)
- [Mentees, Parents, and Guardians – Photo release form](#)
- [Mentees, Parents, and Guardian – Tips – Intake orientation](#)

Kickoff Event

- [Activities Guide - NYC Department of Youth & Community Development's *Activities Catalog for Mentors and Mentees*](#)
- [Activity – "Find someone who..."](#)
- [Activities Guide, School-Based Mentoring Program](#)
- [Activity – "Who Am I?"](#)
- [Activity – "Why Are You So Special?"](#)
- [Guide – A Year's Mentoring Activities](#)
- [Guide – Discussions Topics for Mentors and Mentees](#)

Mentor Training

- [Mentoring 101](#)
- [Sample Role Plays](#)
- [Tips for Success mentors \(1\)](#)
- [Tips for Success mentors \(2\)](#)
- [Training – Examples – Roadblocks to Effective Communication](#)
- [Training – Guidelines for Mentors](#)
- [Training – Mentor Roles and Tasks](#)
- [Training – Mentor Training Agenda](#)
- [Training – Mentor Training Evaluation](#)
- [Training – Stages of the Mentoring Relationship](#)
- [Training – Tips – Building the Mentoring Relationship](#)
- [Guide to Mentoring Boys and Young Men of Color](#)
- [Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework](#)
- [Administration on Aging Toolkit for Serving Diverse Communities](#)
- [The Role of Race and Ethnicity in Mentoring Relationships](#)

WINTER



Photo credit: Midlands Mentoring Partnership

OVERVIEW

As mentoring relationships progress, it's not uncommon for difficulties to arise. It's important at this time to provide mentors with support in order to ensure that they have the resources and know-how to navigate any unforeseen challenges they may encounter. Group meetings are one way to provide mentors and mentees with the emotional and technical backup they need to ensure the long-term wellbeing of their matches.

MENTOR CONNECTIONS GROUP

After your mentors have been matched with mentees for a few months, it's helpful to bring them together for an opportunity to share about their progress as well as challenges they are facing. Connecting with one another not only validates their experiences, but provides an opportunity to get perspective and share insight that they can bring back to their mentoring relationships.

GOALS

1. **Provide an outlet** for mentors to share any challenges, frustrations or confusion about interactions they've had with their mentees.
2. **Provide an opportunity** for mentors to gain perspective about their mentee and (their mentee's family) by hearing the stories of other mentors.
3. **Validate mentors'** effort and progress (no success is too small).
4. **Give mentors an opportunity to share** their expertise and insight with others.

WINTER

Group Format

It's ideal to hold your mentor support group in person, though some programs have done conference calls or video chats if the program is run by a district to make these groups more accessible. In person groups often provide a more comfortable opportunity to connect and share, and refreshments will help set that tone as well! When recruiting for your group, you may want to ask mentors individually if they will come and share specific experiences that you think the group will benefit from – how they overcame a certain challenge, etc. See the next page for a sample agenda for your group.



Photo credit: Kansas City Public Schools

Mentor Tools

- [Mentoring 201: Overcoming MENTOR Challenges \(slideshow\)](#)
- [Using Text Messaging to Support Success Mentors](#)
- [Activity Guide, School-Based Mentoring Program](#)

Mentor Support Group

- [Ongoing Support and Supervision – Mentee Feedback](#)
- [Ongoing Support and Supervision – Mentor Feedback](#)
- [Strengthening Mentors' Active Listening Skills](#)

Spotlight on: Check-ins for Mentees

Reaching out to mentees to check in on their progress, and to find out how the mentoring relationship is going from their perspective—is equally as important as supporting mentors. Find structured or informal times to ask mentees how they feel about their mentor, what they do together, and what they talk about. Ask them if they like spending time with their mentor, and what they feel they are getting out of the relationship - and be sure to find out more if they seem disinterested or disappointed in the relationship. These [Match Support Check-In Questions](#), developed by the NMRC, can help you identify the right question to ask of mentees, mentors and parents/caregivers to find out how things are going.

WINTER

MENTOR CONNECTIONS GROUP – SAMPLE AGENDA

- 1. Provide some unstructured time for mentors to get to know one another and chat** over light refreshments. Provide nametags if working with a group that doesn't know one another already (15 minutes)
- 2. Share some framing for today's conversation** – that it will be an opportunity to share about your mentoring experiences so far, share ideas about what's worked for you in your relationship, and get ideas for how to handle any challenges you're facing. Share that many mentors face similar challenges in their work but may not know how common their experiences are, so this group provides an opportunity to get insight and connect (5 minutes)
- 3. Ask mentors to form a circle and ask each one to share a “rose” and “thorn” about their mentoring experience so far.** A “rose” is one thing that's going well and a “thorn” is a challenge they've faced (20 minutes)
- 4. After everyone has spoken, mention any themes you noticed.** Were there a few mentors feeling challenged by engaging a more quiet/withdrawn mentee? Were a few mentors feeling that they weren't making progress toward the program goals? Engage mentors in a conversation about a topic that seems relevant to the group, by asking for ideas or suggestions about what has worked for the mentors in the group (30 minutes)
 - After mentors share, it's helpful to summarize what's been said, and add any additional guidance or reminders that you want the group to walk away with. Remind mentors to recognize and celebrate the progress they are making, no matter how small. Share stories about how other mentors you've worked with have overcome similar challenges, and provide alternative explanations about what might be going on if you feel mentors are making assumptions about students and families. Remember that this group is an opportunity for mentors to get some perspective about the challenges they are facing and walk away with some new ideas to try, as well as feelings of support and validation that they are doing their best. Remind mentors that by simply showing up for a young person, even if they don't know the perfect things to say, they are reminding their mentee that they are cared for and worthwhile.
- 5. Wrap Up:** Ask each mentor to share one thing they'll take away from the group discussion, or one thing they've learned from their mentee so far.

SPRING



Photo credit: Midlands Mentoring Partnership

OVERVIEW

Spring is a time to prepare for next year and ensure that mentors and mentees have opportunities to reflect on their year, celebrate progress, and process the closure of the program or the school year (depending on whether they will continue with their mentors into the following year). Here are some key steps and events that take place in the spring.

- Early Spring – Planning process for the next year begins
- Early Spring – Informal check in with mentors to prep for the year's end
- Late Spring – Closure party

EARLY SPRING - Next Year Planning -

Early spring is a great time to begin planning for next year. This will limit the amount of work that has to be done over the summer. Be sure to take some time to reflect on what has gone well this year, and what adjustments can be made to strengthen your program for next year.

CHECKLIST

- Make any adjustments in program processes, training materials, and timeline based on learnings from this year.
- Apply for TA to help you strengthen aspects of your program that need improvement.
- Work with the school attendance team to create a plan for identifying new mentees based on end of year attendance data.
- Identify whether existing mentors are interested in continuing into the next year, and facilitate an orientation for new prospective mentors.

SPRING

Spotlight on: Closure Policy

It's important to be clear with mentors and mentees about how long the relationship is expected to last. Toward the end of the original mentoring commitment, many programs ask mentors if they would like to continue mentoring the same student into the following year. Mentors may not want to continue mentoring because of the time commitment or other factors. Even though the mentor isn't expected to continue beyond the year mark, it's important to explain to young people the reasons the mentor can't continue in a way they can understand, and to remind them that the match ending isn't their fault.

EARLY SPRING

- Informal Check-in with Mentors about Match Closure -

At this point in the year, it may be helpful to have an informal check-in with mentors to start preparing them for the end of the year. Remember, healthy closure is key to the mentoring relationship having a positive impact on students, so you'll want to take this opportunity to talk with mentors about their plans for next year, whether they are interested in continuing to mentor the same student, and how they should be preparing their mentee for the end of the school year or the relationship, depending on whether they plan to continue.

Couple this guidance with a fun, casual, "drop in" activity, such as the soda break activity pictured here used by Omaha Public Schools. This can be a great opportunity to thank mentors while giving them some guidance on the closure process.

If mentors don't plan to continue mentoring a student formally, talk with them about how they can share this with their mentee in a sensitive way. If they plan to keep in touch informally, coach them on how to be specific about what this will look like to avoid confusion for their mentee.



Image credit: Omaha Public Schools

SPRING

LATE SPRING

- Closure Party -

As the school year comes to a close, you'll want to plan an event that allows mentors and mentees to reflect on their time together, and celebrate their progress and the relationships they've built. This event can take many forms, from a special celebratory breakfast, to an after school barbecue and kickball game. This is a great event to invite parents, caregivers and families to so they can share in the celebration and be thanked for their contributions to the relationship as well.

GOALS:

Thank participants, and provide mentors and mentees with an opportunity to reflect on their experience in the program and celebrate both personal progress and interpersonal growth.

CHECKLIST:

- Convene an advisory group of mentors and mentees to help you plan the event, and take the lead on the program, decorations, and activities.
- Create an invite to share with mentees, mentors and families at least 2 weeks before the event.
- Print certificates of participation to all mentees and mentors, and personalize them with specific achievements where you can! Other giveaways, such as school pens, or t-shirts or hats with the program name on them, can be a nice touch as well.



Photo credit: Kansas City Public Schools

SPRING

LATE SPRING - Closure Party -

ACTIVITIES:

- 1. Welcome Address:** The principal or a district leader can express pride on behalf of the school about all of the progress made by mentees and mentors, and can thank everyone for participating in the program.
- 2. Youth and Mentor-Led Group Activity, Game, Speeches, or Performance:** The structure of your event will vary depending on the activity you choose. You may choose to do an informal event such as a barbecue and kickball game, or a more formal event such as a sit down breakfast. Where possible, let mentors and mentees take the lead. Consider having a mentee or a mentor make a speech, or do a musical or artistic performance of some kind. Find opportunities for mentors and mentees to shape the event and showcase their talents.
- 3. Pair or Small Group Reflection Activity:** Be sure to build in time for mentors and mentees to gather in pairs or small groups to reflect on their experience. You may want to create a worksheet with simple prompts such as “My favorite memory from this year is” and “Something I learned about my mentor/mentee is” to structure these conversations.

*My Brother's Keeper
Mentor Breakfast*



*The time you have invested with
your mentee has paid off. Our
students have improved attendance
but, most importantly they feel
connected with adults on campus.
This is thanks to your dedication.*



*Image credit: Fresno Unified
School District*

SPRING

Quick Resources

- **Closure Party**

- [Closure training booklet](#)
- [Closure training outline](#)
- [Mentor Recognition – 101 Ways to Give Recognition](#)
- [Mentor Recognition – Checklist](#)
- [Mentor Recognition – Recognition Calendar of Events](#)

- **Prep for next year**

- [Structured Match Closure – Closure](#)
- [Structured Match Closure – Closure Interview Form](#)
- [Structured Match Closure – Mentee Mentor Termination Ritual](#)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- **General Resources**

- [Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™](#)
- [Every Student, Every Day Success Mentor Implementation Guide](#)

- **Getting Programs Started**

- [Building the Foundation for a Strong Mentoring Relationship \(slideshow\)](#)
- [Coordinator Training Evaluation](#)
- [Coordinator Training Facilitator's Guide](#)
- [Coordinator Training Run of the Show](#)
- [Coordinator Training Template \(slideshow\)](#)
- [School Checklist for Developing and Launching a Success Mentors Program](#)
- [Supporting the Mentoring Match \(slideshow\)](#)
- [Technical Assistance Requests: Instructions and Template](#)
- [Webinar Reflection Tool Handout](#)
- [Teachers as mentors](#)

- **Support Resources**

- [Activities Guide, School-Based Mentoring Program](#)
- [Developmental Relationships Handout](#)
- [NYC Department of Youth & Community Development's *Activities Catalog for Mentors and Mentees*](#)
- [Using Text Messaging to Support Success Mentors](#)

- **Trainings**

- [Guide to Mentoring Boys and Young Men of Color](#)
- [Mentoring 101: Building a Strong Foundation for Your Mentoring Relationship \(slideshow\)](#)
- [Mentoring 201: Overcoming Mentoring Challenges \(slideshow\)](#)
- [Mentoring For Black Male Youth \(slideshow\)](#)
- [Supporting Young People in the Wake of Violence and Trauma \(slideshow\)](#)
- [A New Way Forward: Healing What's Hurting Black America](#)

NMRC TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Wondering whether technical assistance might improve your mentoring program?

- Are you a **new Success Mentors program** in need of support for mentor recruitment and retention?
- Do you want to learn mentoring **best practices** for managing mentoring relationships or monitoring matches?
- Do you need support to customize and deliver a **mentor training** for your Success Mentors?
- Do you need help with designing a **mentor-mentee evaluation** or developing a logic model for a grant application?

The [National Mentoring Resource Center](#) provides free technical assistance to youth mentoring programs around their individual needs and the improved implementation of specific mentoring practices. Requests are now submitted through OJJDP's centralized technical assistance site, TTA360.

[CLICK HERE](#)

to submit a no-cost request for Technical Assistance for your youth mentoring program, or visit <https://tta360.ojjdp.ojp.gov/>.