Plan-It Youth
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Mentoring Australia
National Benchmarks for
Mentoring Programs

Preliminary Information

Mentoring:

BENCHMARKS FOR EFFECTIVE & RESPONSIBLE MENTORING PROGRAMS

In June 2000, Mentoring Australia, the national association for mentors and mentoring programs, convened a representative group of mentoring practitioners, all of whom had significant experience in the development and management of mentoring programs. The workshop was supported by the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, and endorsed by the Career Education Association of Victoria and VETNETwork.

The aim of the meeting was to develop a set of principles which would guide the development, management and funding of quality mentoring programs in Australia.

The principle aim of these 'benchmarks' is to enhance the rigour of mentoring programs by setting standards for responsible mentoring. The benchmarks are also recommended as a platform for government and other bodies to determine eligibility for funding support to mentoring programs.

This document outlines a core set of principles which is recommend for use in establishing and managing effective mentoring programs and is designed for use by mentors, managers, and government and other funding agencies.

This document is available to any individual or organization with an interest in promoting responsible mentoring. On behalf of Mentoring Australia, you are invited to share these principles with your colleagues.

Mentoring Australia
July, 2000

WHAT IS MENTORING?

For the purposes of this document 'mentoring' is defined as "a mutually beneficial relationship which involves a more experienced person helping a less experienced person to identify and achieve their goals".

Effective mentoring
- Is a relationship that focuses on the needs of the mentee
- Fosters caring and supportive relationships
- Encourages all mentees to develop to their fullest potential
- Is a strategy to develop active community partnerships

While, in the main, mentoring occurs on a one-to-one basis, elements of mentoring may be present in group situations where, under certain circumstances, a one-to-one relationship emerges as an important vehicle for growth and development for mentees. The one-to-one relationship is the key to effectiveness in mentoring.

While most mentors undertake the mentoring role as volunteers, there are circumstances where paid staff take on mentoring responsibilities. Whether paid or volunteer staff become mentors, the role extends beyond a 'mere' employment responsibility.

GOOD MENTORING PROGRAMS

A responsible mentoring program requires:
- A well-defined mission statement and established operating principles
- Regular, consistent contact between mentor and mentee
- Establishment under the auspices of a recognised organisation
- Paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills
- Written role statements for all staff and volunteer positions
- Adherence to Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) requirements
- Inclusiveness in relation to ethnicity, culture, socio-economic background, gender and sexuality as appropriate to the program
- Adequate ongoing financial and in-kind resources
- Written administrative and program procedures
- Documented criteria which define eligibility for participation in the program
- Program evaluation and ongoing assessment
- A program plan that has input from stakeholders
- Risk management and confidentiality policies
- Use of generally accepted accounting practices
- A rationale for staffing arrangements based on the needs of all parties

A Quality Checklist for Mentoring Programs

The following elements are recommended as a checklist for evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs.

1. A STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

A statement of purpose developed in consultation with the stakeholders and participants which includes:

- A Mission statement for the program
- A clear statement of the values and philosophies underpinning the program

2. A PROGRAM PLAN

A realistic, attainable, and easy-to-understand operational plan that includes:

- A description of activities and profile of all participants and stakeholders
- An assessment of need
- Goals, objectives, and timelines, for all aspects of the program
- Funding and resource development requirements

3. POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Written policies and procedures which address:

- Rights and responsibilities
- Confidentiality and privacy
- Legal issues
- Insurances (including volunteer insurance)
- Duty of care
- Occupational Health and Safety
- Protection against harassment
- Grievance issues
- Ethical issues
- 'Get out' clauses
- Arrangements for future contacts between mentor and mentee

4. A RECRUITMENT & SELECTION PROCESS

A recruitment plan for both mentors and mentees that includes:

- Strategies that outline realistic expectations and benefits for those involved in the program
- Ongoing marketing and public relations
- Targeting mentees on the basis of their needs

Eligibility screening for mentors and mentees that includes:

- A formal application process for mentors and mentees
- An initial assessment of the mentee's needs & suitability
- Eligibility criteria for mentors and mentees that relate to the program statement of purpose and needs of the target population
- A personal interview for mentors
- Appropriate screening for mentors, which may include character references, child abuse registry check, and criminal record checks
- Assessment of each mentor's willingness to participate in training and/or orientation

5. MENTOR PREPARATION

An orientation program for mentors and/or mentees that includes:

- An overview of the Program
- Clarification of roles and responsibilities
- Description of eligibility, screening process, and suitability requirements
- Clarification of the level of commitment expected (time, energy, flexibility)
- Confidentiality and liability information
- Do's and don'ts of relationship management
- Boundaries and limitations for the mentor's contact with the mentee
- Identification of the benefits and recognition available to mentors from involvement in the program
- A summary of program policies, procedures and guidelines

A training program for mentors and /or mentees that includes:

- Skilled and experienced staff trainers
- Cultural and social sensitivity, and acceptance of individual differences
- Guidelines on how to get the most out of the mentoring relationship
- Crisis management and problem solving
- Communication skills
- Referral points for other support services
- Ongoing skills development as appropriate

6. A MENTOR/MENTEE MATCHING & MONITORING STRATEGY

A matching strategy that includes:

- A link with the program's statement of purpose and the program's eligibility criteria
- A rationale for selection
- A statement of understanding detailing the conditions of the mentoring relationship

    Value-Added components may include:

    - Pre-match social activities between mentors and mentees
    - Team building activities to reduce the anxiety of the first meeting

A monitoring process that includes:

- Consistent, scheduled meetings with staff, mentors, and mentees
- A framework for ongoing feedback
- Written records
- Input from community partners and significant others
- A process for managing grievances, recognition, re-matching, interpersonal problem solving, and premature termination of the mentoring relationship

7. MENTOR/MENTEE SUPPORT

Support to Mentors which includes:

- Regular debriefing
- Troubleshooting
- Recognition of the mentor's contribution - especially for volunteers

    Value-Added components may include:

    - Opportunities for involvement in other voluntary services
    - A formal launch event
    - Ongoing peer support groups for volunteers, mentees, and others
    - Ongoing training and development
    - Opportunities for discussion of relevant issues, and information dissemination as appropriate
    - Networking with appropriate organizations
    - Social gatherings of different groups as needed
    - An Annual recognition and appreciation event
    - Newsletters or other mailings to mentees, mentors, supporters, and sponsors

8. A CLOSURE POLICY

Formal closure steps that include:

- Clear procedures for exiting the program
- Clearly stated policy for future contacts

    Value Added components may include:

    - Assistance for mentees in defining the next steps to continue achieve personal goals

9. EVALUATION & ASSESSMENT

An evaluation process based on:

- Ongoing consultation with stakeholders
- Continuous improvement linked to the program's strategic plan
- Program criteria and statement of purpose

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Comments on the document are welcome, please forward any comments to Lesley Tobin at Dusseldorp Skills Forum (email: **lesley@dsf.org.au** telephone: **02 9212 5800**).

Chapter One
Project Description and Background

WHAT IS PLAN –IT YOUTH?

Plan-It Youth is a practical response to the situation of early school leavers. It is a preventative program designed to support young people in Year 9 and/or 10 to investigate their post-school options.

For many young people the decision to leave school early is made without careful planning. Many students leave school at the end of year 10 believing, or hoping, they will get an apprenticeship (many students are offered trial apprenticeships over December, Jan, Feb) a traineeship, a good job or a place in a particular course. The reality is, most of these early school leavers will be unsuccessful in their attempt to seek a positive pathway into employment. Their attempts will fail for various reasons – the 'trial apprenticeship' never eventuated into a permanent one, the course was filled by older students etc. These students then find themselves in a position where they may consider returning to school. If they do choose to return to school they face the disadvantage of having limited subject selection as well as being 4-6 weeks behind their peers because of missed classes. If they choose to NOT return to school they invariably follow a pathway of marginalised activities ie part-time/casual work, unemployment etc.

Plan-It Youth seeks mentors from the community to be trained through TAFE and then work in a one-on-one relationship with a potential early school leaver. The program is structured to enable the mentors to spend much of their time with the students out in the community – talking to employers, employees, visiting TAFE Colleges etc. The aim is for the student to get a 'real' picture of what his/her options will be if he/she does leave school. The program provides an opportunity for students to plan their exit from school into a positive destination and discover the many ways that his/her goals can be realised.

Many students make the decision not to leave school but to continue on to year 11 and 12. For these students, that decision means a more informed subject choice and a purpose for their extra two years of education. For those who do leave school, their exit is planned to ensure a positive destination and many students continue with the support of their mentor for at least 6 months.

Plan-It Youth Description

Plan-It Youth is an innovate project operating on the Central Coast of NSW. It provides support, through mentoring, to young people at risk, exposing them to other experiences of life and increasing their opportunities.

It brings together community groups and agencies to work together for the benefit of young people in the local area.

Research indicates young people who leave school prior to completing Year 12 are twice as likely to become unemployed by the age of 24[1] Plan-It Youth offers young people who are at risk of leaving formal education/ training early, the opportunity to plan for their future careers and find a positive way into further training or the workforce.

The following agencies are already committed to this project and work together for its success:
- NSW TAFE Commission Board
- NSW Department of Education & Training
- Hunter Institute of Technology
- Central Coast Active Retirees and Mentors Incorporated (ARM)
- Hunter Valley Training Company
- Dusseldorp Skills Forum
- Central Coast Adult & Community Education

How Plan-It Youth Works

There are 4 phases to the Plan-It Youth project that are integral to the successful outcomes for those young people who are selected to participate.

Phase One: **Mentor Recruitment & Training**
Volunteer Mentors (mature-aged unemployed people, retirees and possible secondees from business and education) complete a 27 hour Mentor Training Course (over a three month period) offered through TAFE Outreach.

Phase Two: **Introductions and Matchings**
Students are selected for the program based on their indication to leave school at the end of year 10. Participation is entirely voluntary and student numbers are only limited by numbers of mentors available. Information sessions are held for students, parents and the mentors. An activity session is held with potential mentors and students. to assess the dynamics and possible matching of mentors with young people.

Phase Three: **Pathways Planning and Career Investigation Project**
Students and mentors participate in the project (weekly, at school) and then work together on the student's career investigation. Mentor debriefing sessions are held at the completion of each session of the project This vital phase concludes with a "celebration of learning" event where students present their project findings.

Phase Four: **Ongoing Mentor Support (6-12 months)**
Each young person is offered personal mentor support for a period up to 12 months. The mentor will keep a record of the career development of the young person and look out for opportunities and contacts. There may be a need for mentors to offer a second-chance experience if the young person remains confused about their transition. This support is monitored and encouraged by the project co-ordinator.

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[1] Australia's Young Adults: The Deepening Divide   Dusseldorp Skills Forum 1999

PLAN –IT YOUTH

A project of Central Coast ARM Inc

Introduction

Early in 1998, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum held a focus group on the Central Coast of NSW. The group consisted on retired and semi-retired people who were interested in looking at how to encourage retirees to utilise the skills and knowledge they had gained throughout their working life. The establishment of the ARM group was a direct result of those focus meetings though the make up of the current group is very different to the original group. This project is very much "work in progress" and has evolved from the input of many people – both young and old.

Background to the Development of the ARM Group

A recent study found that the proportion of the population over 60 years of age would double over the next 50 years. [2] Many of these increasing numbers of older people face a 'crisis of disconnection' as they reshape their lives after a lifetime engaged in family and work. For many of those outside the workforce (retired, semi-retired or unable to find employment) there is a feeling of being disengaged from their community and a sense of loss in being unable to use the vast knowledge they have accumulated through a lifetime of work. For those who relocate, away from family and friends, these feelings of dislocation can be compounded by a sense of isolation.

Originating from a discussion group on Barbara Lepani's paper, "Wisdom Leadership in Elders", a small group of people formed the nucleus for ARM (Active Retirees and Mentors). ARM took up the challenge of offering older people the opportunity to re-engage with their community, to 'take the road of midlife not as the beginning of disengagement and retirement, but as a newer and more profound path to meaningful work'.

Their aim was to develop an umbrella organisation for non-working people who are searching for ways to remain engaged with their community whilst at the same time making use of their skills and life experiences. They agreed that the work should be built upon the strengths of the community seeking, through collaboration, to add new dimensions to the efforts of local organisations including schools and TAFE. This intention has proved a defining characteristic of the ARM endeavour.

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[1] Barbara Lepani, *Wisdom Leadership in Elders*, 1998.

The first step for this newly formed organisation was to conduct an audit of existing mentoring and volunteering opportunities for retirees on the Central Coast. To establish communication and connection between the generations the ARM group approached a local secondary school (Berkeley Vale Community High School) to undertake this research.

A group of Year 11 students enrolled in the HSC 'Life Management' course completed this research as part of their course. Students, with the assistance of teachers and ARM volunteers, approached as many local community organisations as they could find, to collect information on the nature of the volunteer work available. From this research a database was built and it is intended that this database will be updated each year by a Life Management class as part of their course content.

Apart from the DET Starlink project, which operated as a pilot in 1998, the research indicated there were no mentoring programs operating on the Central Coast. The ARM group has identified mentoring as an opportunity for young people to access support during critical transition points in their lives.

Central Coast ARM's objectives:
The development and expansion of mentoring opportunities for volunteers in the community by:

> • building partnerships with key community organisations;
> • recruiting volunteers as mentors;
> • providing quality resources and training;
> • supporting existing volunteer programs….. and
> • developing new mentoring programs to engage these volunteers.

Who are the mentors?

Currently the mentors are being drawn from the TAFE Outreach program. These students are mature aged men and women who are looking for work. Interestingly, many of the mentors have been employed as teachers' aides in schools after demonstrating their skills in working with young people.

The ARM group recognises the potential vulnerability of this group and the likelihood that they will only mentor on short-term projects because of their need to seek employment.

The mentors come from three pools of people in the community:

- TAFE Outreach students (mature-aged job seekers)

- Retirees – the Central Coast has approximately 50,000 retirees that could be tapped into

- Business People – ARM is currently approaching Central Coast businesses to nominate staff members to mentor as part of their paid work, for approximately 2hours per week for a year. Please refer to the document *Workplace Relevance of Mentoring Skills*.

627 Project

This project involves students in the School-to-Work Plans project acting as mentors for a targeted group of Year Six students from Chittaway Bay Primary School. The Year Six students have been selected as students who are at risk of not achieving their learning potential in high school. They have been meeting with their mentors on a weekly basis, with the aim of the project for them to investigate high school in a similar way to the year 10 students investigating their post-school options. The students alternate between the high school and the primary school as a venue for the project. It is anticipated that these students will be utilised as leaders in the high school orientation days.

Why Mentoring?

Behind every successful person there is one elementary truth; somewhere, somehow, someone cared about their growth and development. This person was their mentor.[3]

A mentor is an experienced and trusted friend who provides one-on-one support, guidance and encouragement in the development of a mentee.

More formally, Freedman cites Bronfenbrenner at Cornell University who has defined mentoring as
...a one-to-one relationship between a pair of unrelated individuals, usually of different ages, and is developmental in nature. 'A mentor is an older, more experienced person who seeks to further the development of character and competence in a younger person. Guidance may take many forms, including demonstration, instruction, challenge, and encouragement 'on a more or less regular basis over an extended period of time. Furthermore, this relationship is distinguished be 'a special bond of mutual commitment' and 'an emotional character of respect, loyalty and identification.[4]

In the United States, mentoring is undertaken on a very large scale. It displays many characteristics of a social movement, operating primarily in the private and community sectors, and sometimes with the support of the public sector. Government can however play an important enabling role in sponsoring voluntary mentoring programs.

While there are many individual and relatively isolated mentoring programs in Australia, they are often seen as a marginal, feel-good middle class philanthropy and not a strategic intervention to support youth at risk. A quick glance at the growing body of literature would convince otherwise.

Research identifies the strengths, the weaknesses, the risks and the untapped potential of a mentoring program which attends to
- the front end (marketing, recruitment and mentor training);
- to the implementation phase (program delivery, support and infrastructure); and
- follow-up (evaluation).

When all three phases are done well, the practical outcomes for young people (and, as a side benefit, for mentors) can be substantial.

Mentoring is not THE solution to youth as risk nor to social alienation. But it is one approach that research and experience suggests is worth pursuing.

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[2] Dr Beverly Kaye, Up is Not the Only Way, 1993

[3] In Marc Freedman, *The Kindness of Strangers: Adult Mentors, Urban Youth and the New Volunteerism,* Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1993, p.31

While volunteer mentors won't single-handedly meet all the interpersonal needs of American youth, mentoring highlights the importance of adult relationships for youth while challenging us to move beyond volunteerism and to implement structural changes capable of increasing opportunities for adult contact in the schools, community organisations, and social programs where young people spend so much of their time. As such, volunteer mentoring amounts to the citizen-participation wing of a broad and promising movement to personalise education and social policy.[5]

Mentoring Studies

One of the most compelling arguments for the importance of relationships comes from longitudinal research conducted by Emmy Werner, a psychologist at the University of California-Davis. Werner directed a study of 700 children born on the Hawaiian Island of Kauai. All of these children were born in extreme poverty to parents who laboured at local sugar and pineapple plantations. In most cases, one parent was either alcoholic or mentally ill; over the years many of the youth showed signs of mental disturbance.

Using data from the first 30 years of the lives of these children, Werner and her colleague Ruth S Smith, found that the youth who succeeded showed an ability to locate an adult in addition to their parents who could help them cope with the world:

> Without exception, all the children who thrived had at least one person that provided them consistent emotional support- a grandmother, an older sister, a teacher or neighbour. These are the kids who are good at recruiting a substitute parent who is a good model for them (Werner 1982; Goleman 1987).

While Werner's study emphasises the resilience of the youth – including an innate ability to find helping elders – it may be that making those elders easier to find, or actually providing them, might have some impact on at-risk youth who are not yet resilient.[6]

Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America Research

Since 1985 there has been widespread enthusiasm for mentoring in the United States of America. Mentoring was seen as a way to address the needs and problems of youth – but there was no firm evidence that mentoring programs produced results. Public/Private Ventures, a development and research organization based in Philadelphia, USA, now provides scientifically reliable evidence that mentoring programs can positively affect young people. This evidence derives from research conducted at local affiliates of Big Brothers/Big Sisters of America (BB/BSA), the oldest, best-known and arguably, the most sophisticated mentoring program in the United States. Big Brothers /Big Sisters programs currently maintain 75,000 active matches between a volunteer adult and a young person. Carefully established procedures and criteria govern both the programs and matches.

P/PV conducted the study of 959 youth, half of whom participated in the program in BB/BS agencies in Philadelphia, PA; Phoenix, AZ; Wichita, KS; Minneapolis, MN; Rochester, NY; Columbus, OH; Houston and San Antonio, TX.

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[4] Marc Freedman, *The Kindness of Strangers: Adult Mentors,Urban Youth and the New Volunteerism*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1993, pp.xii-xiii

[6] Marc Freedman, *Partners in Growth: Elder Mentors and At-Risk Youth*, Public/Private Ventures 1988. p13

The 959 youth who applied to the program during the study period were randomly assigned to one of two groups: the treatment group was eligible to receive a Big Brother/Big Sister right away; the control group was required to wait 18 months before being assigned to a Volunteer, often the usual waiting period for a BB/ BS Agency.

At the start of the study, the two groups were statistically identical on all characteristics.

Most of the youth in the research sample were between the ages 10 and 14; nearly 60 percent were members of a minority group; more than 60 percent were boys; and were near poor to poor. Many live in families with histories of substance abuse and/or domestic violence.

P/PV found that Little Brothers and Sisters who met with their "Bigs" regularly for about a year were:

- 46% less likely than their peers to use illegal drugs and 27 % less likely to start drinking;

- 52% less likely than their peers to skip a day of school and 37 % less likely to skip a class;

- more trusting of their parents or guardians, less likely to lie to them, and felt more supported and less criticised by their peers and friends.

The study also concluded that the success of Big Brother\Big Sister Programs could be attributed to the thorough screening of volunteers, the careful matching of Bigs and Littles and the extensive supervision by professional social workers.