

Guidelines for Effective Termination of a Match

Termination may be the result of a variety of situations.

- Sometimes it may become necessary to terminate a match due to conflicts between the mentee and mentor.
- Sometimes termination may occur because either the mentee or the mentor drops out of the program. The dropouts may occur as a result of relationship conflicts or other factors (e.g., mentor's time limitations, other commitments, personal issues).
- Sometimes it may become apparent that the mentee and/or mentor may work more effectively with another mentor/mentee. In these cases, reassignment may be best.

Although difficult, termination should provide closure and opportunities for learning. In order for termination to accomplish this, the program coordinator should consider the following guidelines:

- Identify and verbally clarify the reasons for termination with both the mentee and mentor. If the reasons involve the behavior of either party, this should be presented in a constructive manner.
- Give the mentee and mentor the opportunity to discuss together what worked and didn't work in their relationship and to identify ways to handle future situations more effectively. The program coordinator should facilitate a conversation between the mentee and mentor in order to make sure that both parties express themselves positively and constructively. This information may be critical to successfully rematching the mentee or mentor.
- Both parties should be encouraged to share their feelings about ending their relationship. Mentors who are terminating because of time limitations or other reasons not related to the mentee need to make particularly clear to the mentee that s/he did not do anything to make the mentor leave. The mentor should share with the mentee the things about the mentee that s/he liked. Without this—and often even with it to a lesser degree—the mentee will feel they are unlovable or flawed in some way. The mentor should do all that he or she can to convince the child this is not so.
- Plan the next step. If the mentee is to be reassigned, discuss the new relationship with the mentee alone first. Help him or her to identify mistakes that occurred with the previous mentor and discuss ways to avoid those mistakes in the future. If the match ended due to factors other than relationship conflict (e.g., mentor's part-time job schedule changed), reassure the mentee that s/he was not to blame and help him or her process any feelings about the termination of that relationship.



Tips for Mentors and Coordinators to Terminate Relationships

When the decision has been made to end the formal mentoring relationship:

- Set a specific date for your last meeting and inform your mentee of this ahead of time;
- Be honest, candid and supportive, regardless of the reason for the termination;
- Talk about the reasons for ending the relationship;
- Talk about your thoughts and feelings for the mentee and your feelings about the termination;
- Encourage your mentee to do the same;
- Be positive and supportive, especially about what the future may hold for your mentee;
- If it seems appropriate, talk to the liaison about a replacement mentor for your mentee; and
- Don't make promises you may not keep (e.g., that you will keep in touch).

