

Program Supervision Guidelines

How often should we check in with our clients (mentors, mentees and parents/ guardians/teachers)?

General guidelines:

These guidelines are structured around traditional one-to-one matches that meet in the community. They will need to be amended for group, peer and in-school mentoring.

- Determine for your program the specific frequency and type of supervision that will take place.
- Establish a consistent schedule for supervisions for each match and for your program. Ensure that all parties are aware of this schedule and that it is a foundational part of the program.
- Create supervisions templates for mentors, mentees and guardians selecting from the questions below. The templates should include the date, the mentee's name, the mentor's name and the supervisor's name.
- Every program supervision visit/check-in must be documented. The forms must be kept by the program coordinator. They are confidential.
- Contact the mentor within the first two weeks of the match. Use this contact to make sure the pair is meeting, to find out what activities they have done together and to assess how the mentor feels about the match thusfar.
- During the next few months, continue to check in with the mentor every two weeks. These ongoing contacts will help ensure that the mentor and child/youth meet regularly and are also important for uncovering any start-up problems that require program staff's immediate assistance.
- For at least a year, continue to check in monthly with the mentor. The check-in discussion during this period should be focused on monitoring the quality of the mentoring relationship; assessing whether it has established goals and is making progress toward these goals; assessing the level of engagement between the mentor and child/youth; and, helping to address problems that may be arising between the pair. Your program should also make sure that mentors know how to contact staff, whenever necessary, for advice and support.

Supervision Questions:

Below are basic guidelines for the kinds of questions that should be asked during supervision. Again, these will need to be adapted depending on the nature of your program

Possible Questions for the Mentor:

How is your match going?

How do you feel about being a mentor?

Do you and your mentee enjoy spending time together?

What kinds of activities do you do when you are together?

How do you decide what activities to do together?

What strengths and common interests do you draw upon or could you draw upon with your mentee?

Do you and your mentee have trouble thinking up things to do together?

Do you spend much time talking?

How often do you see your mentee? How much time do you spend together at each meeting?

Does your mentee keep appointments with you? Does he or she show up on time?

When was your last meeting? What did you do together?

Do you talk to your mentee on the telephone? How often? (for community-based programs)

Do you need help with anything? Is there anything interfering with your match?

How would you describe your mentee's behavior? Does your mentee exhibit any behavior that you do not understand?

How are things going with the parents and other family members? Is the parent of your mentee cooperative? (or, for school-based programs: How are things going with the teacher?)

Are you satisfied with how things are going?

Is there any training you think would be helpful for you?

Is there anything else we should be aware of?

Is there anything we can do to help?

What goals have you and your mentee been working towards?

Types of Supervision

Supervision as Support:

The program coordinator should provide on-going and a wide range of support to the matches throughout the program's cycle. This means offering professional assistance and advice in the following areas:

- Problem solving
- Feedback and encouragement
- Ideas for appropriate activities
- Advice on positive mentoring
- Positive reinforcement to both the mentor and the mentee
- Supports to connect with family or community if this is appropriate within your program

Supervision as Monitoring:

Your program coordinator must regularly monitor matches to determine the participants' continued suitability for the program. Thus, match supervision can be thought of as part of an ongoing screening process. By doing regular monitoring your program continues to fulfill its obligation of care towards its mentees. This monitoring supervision should focus on ensuring:

- The participants are safe
- The participants are following the program's ground rules
- The mentoring relationship is developing positively and problems are solved as they arise
- The mentor and mentee meet regularly as per the program guidelines
- The mentor is demonstrating effective mentoring practices and is using a strengthbased approach in his/her interactions with the mentee
- The match participants are satisfied with their relationship
- The mentor and mentee meet regularly as per the program guidelines
- The mentor is demonstrating effective mentoring practices and is using a strength-based approach in his/her interactions with the mentee
- The match participants are satisfied with their relationship

Overview of Supervision Processes

Your program coordinator or another designated, trained professional should conduct regular supervision with all parties in a match, including the mentor, mentee, and parent or guardian. Supervision contacts can be made by phone or in person, and should follow a regular, agreed-upon schedule. For example, traditional one-to-one or peer matches require supervision contacts:

- Weekly in the first month of a match,
- Monthly for the first six months,
- Bi-monthly from the seventh to twelfth months,
- Quarterly after that.

Group mentoring programs require less frequent monitoring but should include regular contact to provide support and formal supervisions at least quarterly.

If problems are occurring in the match, more frequent contacts are needed. In-person interviews with match participants should take place within the first four months of the match, and around every anniversary of the match if program involvement is ongoing.

The match supervisor should also be available by phone or in person as needed. Additional supervision could also be offered through group support meetings for mentors or parents. Staff should always lead these sessions to intervene should inappropriate or detrimental strategies and advice be offered.

Every attempted and completed supervision contact must be thoroughly documented.

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).