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Best Practices for E-Mentoring

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"

"We are all navigating this new normal together. As we lock arms virtually and try to help one another in the ways we can, our vast world suddenly feels a little smaller and a lot more connected."

\-   Michael Dell

CEO of Dell

Agenda

▷ Recruiting Virtual Participants

▷ Effective Virtual Screening

▷ Training Mentors & Mentees for Effective Virtual Relationships

▷ Virtual Matching & Initiating

▷ Monitoring & Supporting Virtual Matches

▷ Closing Matches Virtually

Recruiting Virtual Participants

Overview of Key Best Practices

▷ Realistically portray what mentoring is like in your E-Mentoring program

▷ Be clear about what is required from mentors

▷ Recruit mentors who are comfortable with using technology to communication

▷ Recruit mentors whose skills and interests align with the goals of your program

▷ Build a virtual recruitment plan to guide your efforts

The Importance of Messaging

▷ Effective recruitment messages can:

- ○ Realistically portray the benefits and challenges of E-Mentoring for the population you serve

- ○ Detail the supports and training available to mentors

- ○ Provide clear technology/network requirements

- ○ Build enthusiasm for E-Mentoring connections

- ○ Clearly and concisely state the program's goals

Virtual Recruitment Strategies

▷ Launch an email recruitment campaign that asks each recipient to forward the email to 2+ friends/colleagues

▷ Launch a social media campaign--ask followers to tag their friends and invite them to learn more about mentoring

▷ Work with corporations--especially tech-focused ones--to host lunch-and-learns with their employees

▷ Launch a campaign focused on sharing mentoring stories

▷ List your virtual opportunity on volunteerism websites

Best Practices for Mentee Recruitment

▷ Provide parents with enough information about your program to give informed consent

- ○ Include information on safety procedures and privacy policies (COPPA)

▷ Make the requirements of the program clear--time, technology/network, parental involvement

▷ Realistically portray the benefits of E-Mentoring for young people, especially during COVID

What is Different When Recruiting for E-Mentoring?

▷ Programs might find volunteers interested in virtual opportunities from different sources

▷ People may not be familiar with E-Mentoring, so recruitment messages should explain the program

▷ Consider where you might find tech-savvy mentors

▷ Talk about key benefits for mentors and mentees

   ○ For mentors, the flexibility of E-Mentoring can be appealing and feel less intimidating than in-person

Recruitment Resources

▷ Overview of recruitment best practices, page 26 in the [E-Mentoring Supplement](#)

▷ Recruiting and Matching the Right Participants: page 58 in the [E-Mentoring Supplement](#)

Effective Virtual Screening

Screening New Recruits

▷ Set criteria for accepting/disqualifying applicants

▷ Require submission of an application

▷ Conduct a video or phone interview

▷ Conduct a comprehensive background check

▷ Check an applicant's social media profiles

▷ Applicant agrees in writing to participate in the program for a minimum length of time

Re-Screening Current Mentors

▷ Programs that already have mentors from a previous program model should consider re-screening them for E-Mentoring.

▷ As long as other screening steps were previously followed, re-screening can involve:

   ○ An interview

   ○ Creation of a new volunteer agreement

Screening Red Flags

- ▷ Extreme behaviors

- ▷ Inappropriate behaviors

- ▷ Over-involvement with children

- ▷ Under-involvement with adults

- ▷ Focused on personal needs

- ▷ Problematic interests or past

- ▷ Discomfort with / lack of access to technology

Considerations for Mentee Screening

▷ Create criteria to determine each youth's access to and comfort using required technologies

▷ Get appropriate permissions from parents for youth under 18

    ○ Parents of youth under 13 have to give programs permission to collect PII (COPPA)

▷ Youth should agree to participate in the program for minimum amount of time required

What is Different When Screening for E-Mentoring?

▷ E-Mentoring interviews can be conducted by video-chat or phone, and can ask more probing questions

▷ Mentor interviews should use program's E-Mentoring technology, if possible--web cams are best!

▷ Programs should screen for access to and comfort with technology with mentors and mentees

▷ Programs should look at mentor applicants' social media

▷ Programs should screen for online communication styles to assist in matching processes

Screening Resources

▷ Overview of screening best practices, page 28 of the [E-Mentoring Supplement](#)

▷ Guidance on screening participants, page 61 of the [E-Mentoring Supplement](#)

▷ Section on Managing Risks, [Part I training recording](#)

▷ Sample mentor [interview questions](#)

▷ [Red flags](#) for mentor screening

▷ Background check services: [Sterling Volunteers](#), [NCSI](#)

Training Mentors & Mentees for Effective Virtual Relationships

Overview of Key Best Practices

▷ Provide a short training/onboarding session.
▷ If a specific video-chatting software will be used for E-Mentoring, consider hosting this training on that platform.
▷ Review new policies and procedures for E-Mentoring.

Topics to Cover with Mentors

▷ **Policy & procedure updates** around scheduling, frequency of mentoring sessions, privacy, and reporting.

▷ **Match Support**

▷ **Closure**

▷ **Online Etiquette--**Tips for communicating on virtual platforms

How the developmental age of the youth might influence their use of and proficiency with communicating via technology?

Topics to Cover with Mentees/Families

▷ Use of the technology platform
▷ Frequency of communication and response time expectations
▷ Tips for being personable and conversational when interacting with their mentor
▷ Displaying appropriate online etiquette
▷ Ethics and safety in E-mentoring relationships

Virtual Relationship Development

▷ Create a safe and open space for communication

▷ Coach mentors to focus on their mentee during sessions; let mentees decide how they spend their time together

▷ Help matches work through miscommunications, which is a common challenge of text-based E-Mentoring

▷ Coach mentors and mentees to use emoticons or emotionally-present language for text-based E-Mentoring

▷ Encourage frequent interactions if possible

What is Different When Training for E-Mentoring?

▷ In addition to regular training on mentoring and positive youth development, **mentors will need to be trained on the platform being used.**

▷ **Mentees and their families will need an orientation** on what to expect in a virtual relationship.

▷ **Specific activities and communication strategies** will need to be reviewed to help guide virtual relationship development.

Training Resources

▷ Overview of training best practices, page 31 of the E-Mentoring Supplement

▷ "Preparing Participants for Good Online Interactions" on page 69 of the E-Mentoring Supplement

▷ Digital Conversations: Emojis, Memes & GIFs

▷ Activities and Conversation Starters for Grades 3-9

Question & Poll Break

Matching Best Practices

▷ Programs should consider the communication styles and preferences of mentors and mentees

▷ Programs should also consider more standard criteria:

- ○ Interests
- ○ Age and Gender
- ○ Race and Ethnicity
- ○ Expressed Preferences of Mentors/Mentees/Parents
- ○ Goals, Strengths, Previous Experience, Career Path

Tips for Matching Virtually

▷ Make sure your strategy for matching aligns with the E-Mentoring technology you're using and makes sense for the goals of your program

▷ Give strong consideration to aligning communication styles over most other compatibility criteria

▷ Elevate youth voice by creating bios for mentors and allow mentees to select their top choices for matching

▷ Consider offering a "trial" period for virtual matches and allow matching changes for a period of time

Tips for Initiating Virtual Matches

▷ Provide matches with virtual icebreakers or conversation starters for their first interaction

▷ When possible, program staff should be present for the match initiation meeting

    ○ Asynchronous programs should inform matches who is responsible for initiating first contact

▷ Matches should virtually "sign" a match agreement

Key Differences When Matching & Initiating for E-Mentoring?

▷ Align matching with your program's E-Mentoring technology and goals

▷ Give special consideration to alignment of communication styles

▷ In synchronous programs, provide mentees with help keeping their appointment with their mentor

▷ In asynchronous programs, set clear expectations for first contact

Matching & Initiating Resources

▷ Overview of matching/initiating best practices on page 34 of the [E-Mentoring Supplement](#)

▷ "Making and Initiating Matches" on page 65 of the [E-Mentoring Supplement](#)

▷ [Considerations for the Matching Process](#)

▷ [Sample Match Agreement](#)

▷ Search Institute: [4 S's Interview Activity](#)

Monitoring & Supporting Virtual Matches

Overview of Key Best Practices

▷ Program should check in with mentors and mentees twice per month for the first month

▷ After the first month, programs should check in once per month with mentors and mentees

▷ Some programs may want to consider checking in with parents if they're serving youth under 18

Components of an Effective Check-In

▷ Programs should discuss during each check-in:

- ○ Recent activities the match has engaged in
- ○ Feelings about how the match is progressing
- ○ Any concerns about child safety
- ○ Impacts of the relationship on each party of the match
- ○ Any technical difficulties that have been experienced
- ○ Any challenges with building the relationship virtually
- ○ Any important upcoming program dates or milestones

Sample Check-In Questions

▷ How is the person you're checking in with doing?

▷ How is the match going? Challenges? Successes?

▷ Are there any challenges around going from in-person to virtual communication? How has this impacted the match?

▷ Has the young person's parent/guardian been supportive of the virtual match relationship (if relevant)?

▷ What activities has the match been doing together? Does the match need more activity recommendations?

▷ Are virtual interactions are safe and appropriate?

▷ Are there any concerns that require reporting?

▷ How can the program offer support?

Other Strategies for Monitoring

▷ Consider the monitoring abilities of your program's E-Mentoring technology

▷ Find a balance between giving matches privacy and also ensuring program staff can effectively monitor

▷ Create a code of conduct to help govern online interactions and set clear expectations

▷ Require matches to report how they're spending their time together, if relevant

Strategies for Supporting

▷ Program staff should be available to help with technical difficulties

▷ Provide ongoing [virtual match activity ideas](#) | [more](#) [ideas](#)

▷ Provide ongoing training opportunities for mentors

▷ Provide matches with a weekly/monthly [safety topic](#)

▷ Provide matches with [tips for connecting virtually](#)

▷ Remember to thank your volunteers often!

What is Different When Monitoring & Supporting for E-Mentoring?

▷ Ask questions during formal check-ins with mentors, mentees, and parents/guardians about technical difficulties

▷ Be responsive in providing technical support to matches

▷ Align monitoring strategies to your program's E-Mentoring technology

▷ Provide matches with task-based activity ideas or a curriculum to guide interactions

Monitoring & Support Resources

▷ Ensuring Safe and Effective Participation Over Time" section of the E-Mentoring Supplement, page 74

▷ Overview of monitoring & support best practices in the E-Mentoring Supplement, page 36

▷ Webinar: Family Engagement as a Strategy for Strengthening Mentoring Relationships

▷ Relationship Development Checklist: guide for checking in with matches

Closing Matches Virtually

Overview of Key Best Practices

▷ Program coordinates closure timeline around final communication date between mentor and mentee.

▷ Program offers a closure training for mentors allowing them to practice talking about their feelings, reflecting on memories, and next steps in the relationship.

▷ Program conducts exit interview with mentors and mentees, and when relevant, with parents or guardians.

Closure Strategies

▷ Choose timeline for match closure.

▷ Set format for match closure meeting whether that is through writing, video-chat, etc. Programs may consider hosting a virtual year-end celebration.

▷ Create time and space for mentors and mentees to thank one another. Consider providing a reflective activity or questions.

▷ Develop a communication plan stating the match has closed and reviewing the program's policy on future contact between matches.

▷ Provide a coaching session for mentors on how to say goodbye.

Virtual Training for Closure

▷ Activities should be based on the elements of closure: learning, appreciation, celebration, and future planning.

▷ Reflection exercise - "Relationships I Have Been Part of" Discuss with a partner a time you ended a close personal relationship.

▷ Role play a healthy closure conversation with your mentee.

▷ Review of program policies for post-closure contact

▷ Turning closure into learning: Mentor self-reflection

What is Different with Closure for E-Mentoring?

▷ Closure is not always done during a final celebration. Therefore, it is important to provide a quality virtual reflective activity.

▷ More communication is needed to provide families with information about the closure process.

▷ Since mentors/mentees are used to meeting virtually, clear policies and procedures need to be reviewed regarding future contact through any digital means.

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Closure Resources

▷ [Sample Mentor Exit Interview](#)

▷ [Sample Post-Closure Contact Permission Form](#)

▷ [Activities for Match Closure](#)

▷ ["THEY ALWAYS COME, AND THEY NEVER SAY GOODBYE": HEALTHY CLOSURE IN MENTORING Webinar](#)

Closing Poll

Our Next Virtual Townhall

Thursday, May 7th

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm | <u>RSVP</u>

We will an open forum on the following topics:

▷ Supporting mentees and families through trauma

▷ Keeping volunteers engaged while programming is paused or moving over to E-Mentoring

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Need Support with Implementation?

What: Up to 3 hours of no-cost support.

When: Now through at least June 10th.

How: fill out this form to request a meeting and a member of staff will reach out to schedule.

Program Consultation

Does your program need more support than can be provided through Open Office Hours?

[Apply for no-cost program consultation!](#)

We are working with programs on an individual basis to find timelines for consultation that meet their needs.

Sarah Wilkinson | sarah@mentorva.org

Q&A & Feedback

What questions do you have after this training?

Do you have any insights or experience you can share on any of the topics we discussed today?

Challenges? Successes?

Feedback Survey:

https://forms.gle/3HmQmogWXgLmVFvJ6