

# **Mentorship & Coaching: Creating a Mentoring Program at your Centre**

## **Introduction**

Mentorship and coaching are proven to be one of the best ways to increase staff engagement, continuous learning and leadership. A mentoring program is a great way to introduce and onboard new staff, encourage existing staff to develop and try new skills, and engage senior staff in a meaningful leadership role. There are many forms of mentoring and coaching can take in your centre, and it's important to assess your objectives and capacity to determine what is right for you.

Although mentoring and coaching are separate practices, they are closely related. Generally mentoring is between individuals at different stages in their careers, with the mentor able to provide advice and insights from their experience in the field. On the other hand, coaching assumes the coach is not an expert in the client's situation and does not necessarily need to be more experienced or knowledgeable than the client. Coaches guide the clients to their solutions through asking the right questions, and listening actively. Most mentoring programs have elements of coaching in them, but not all coaching is necessarily mentoring.

## **Examples of mentoring program types:**

- New employees are immediately matched with a more senior employee, who acts as a coach and guide for first 3 months of employment, checking in regularly
- Staff sign up for mentorship program voluntarily, and work on specific professional development goal with the aid of another staff
- Group mentoring: small communities of practice are formed, each focusing on different areas of professional development
- Several centres in a local community connect to create multi-organizational mentoring program of experienced and new supervisors

## **Examples of coaching program types:**

- Staff are able to book an appointment time with an in-house "coach," another team member who has received training in effective coaching and facilitating
- All interested staff are given coaching training, and create coaching pairs which meet monthly

## Financial Supports

Even if you don't pay people extra for their participation in mentoring, there still may be some associated costs for the centre. In order to have participation from educators, mentoring should be as barrier-free as possible and not occur during workers' legally required lunch/break times.

Costs to consider may include:

- Paying employees for mentoring time
- Paying additional educators to cover mentoring session time
- Giving pairs funds to purchase coffee/snacks for meetings (can be a very low cost way to demonstrate commitment to program)
- Having a small fund for initiatives and ideas that arise out of mentoring program (e.g. supplies to support mentee's professional goals)

## Coaching, Mentoring and Early Learning

In ELCC settings, we view young children as capable, confident, curious learners who are full of potential and our role as adult educators through a facilitation lens. We are there to provide guidance, resources and opportunities to check in, but autonomy over the learning process belongs to the individual and/or group of early learners. *This ideology of facilitation can be applied to relationships with adult learners and mentees.* Ultimately, they should have ownership of their learning/growth outcomes and the process that leads them from their starting point to reaching their goal(s) is just as valuable as their final outcomes.

Before entering into the coaching process, consider the following coaching assumptions to guide your practice:

- Problem-solving is a part of the learning process, and will build and/or strengthen one's capacity to solve similar problems in the future
- When supported by a responsive, experienced Mentor, Mentees can solve problems which might be beyond their reach independently
- Breaking a challenge down into parts is an important component of building the solution

The following breakdown of the GROW Coaching Model will serve as a starting point for identifying goals and creating a meaningful and achievable action plan for coaching.

1. **Goal:** First, you must define and agree upon the outcome you want to achieve. Try to make the goals **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic** and **Time-bound**.
  - What do you want to achieve?
  - What is the ideal scenario/vision for the future?
  - How will you know when the issue is solved?
  
2. **Reality:** Before diving into the best way to solve, it's important to do an honest assessment of where they're at right now. This way, they don't miss some of the information they need in order to reach their goal effectively.
  - Where are you now in this area? (Who, what, where, how often)
  - What have you tried in the past?
  - What are some of your current strengths (and/or strengths of organization)?
  - Discuss self-assessment—what surprised you? What stood out? (blank copies available to mentors)
  
3. **Options:** Here is where you'll discuss what options are available right now, and what the effects are of each option.
  - What are the choices?
  - What obstacles do you perceive standing in your way of making this change?
  
4. **Way forward:** Time to create an implementation plan on how to manage the change.
  - What are the needed actions to make this happen?
  - What 3 actions can you take that would make sense in the next week? The next month?
  - What resources would provide added support to make this happen?
  - When do you want to check in again about your progress?

## Mentoring Design Worksheet

Use this worksheet to work through what exactly your mentoring program will look like, and what it will need for all involved. Ideally, this should be done collaboratively with both employees and senior management present.

This worksheet was adapted from [Guidance for mentoring in childhood practice](#)

### Identifying Purpose and Aims

What is the purpose of the programme? What are the goals of the programme?	
Why is mentoring considered the right method for achieving those goals?	
Who are the stakeholders/those involved?	
How will the purpose of the mentoring programme be communicated to stakeholders?	
What are the time frames?	
How will success be measured?	

### Supporting & Managing the Program

Who is the main organizer/coordinator?	
Who needs to be recruited to support the program?	
What resources (including financial) are needed? <i>For example: space for meetings, scheduled time for meetings</i>	
How will the information be disseminated and communication be facilitated among mentors, mentees, programme co-ordinator and other stakeholders?	
How and when will mentoring happen?	

### Participant Recruitment

Where will mentors and mentees come from? <i>(e.g. internally, between multiple organizations, across municipality)</i>	
How will you recruit them?	
How and who decides who gets a mentor?	
What are the criteria for recruiting and matching? <i>(e.g. matched on similar educational backgrounds, similar age groups, etc)</i>	
Will mentors have more than one mentor?	
What are the roles and responsibilities of each participant, for example, the mentee, mentor, coordinator and the organisation's line managers?	

### Training and Orientation

What information, training and resources will mentors have?	
Will there be ongoing training or a one-off session?	
How will the orientation training for mentees be provided? What will it include?	

### Managing the ongoing relationship

For how long and where will the mentors and mentees meet?	
What will be the frequency of meetings/contacts?	
Will participants have to keep a record of what is discussed and progress made?	
What boundaries will be set for the mentoring	

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*Resources are provided for reference only. Always consult current legislation in your jurisdiction to create policies and procedures that meet the needs of your organization.*

relationship?	
How will problematic issues be dealt with, for example, problems within the programme, issues between mentor and mentee?	
What support and supervision will mentors receive?	
What support and supervision will the co-ordinator receive?	