

## 5.4 MATCHING MENTORS AND MENTEES

‘E le sili le ta’i ilo le tapuai’ - One cannot achieve without the help of many.

### OVERVIEW

Figure 10. Matching - key activities



Effective mentoring relationships require a good “fit” between the mentor and mentee. The dynamics between the pair, and their ability to form a good connection, will affect the quality of the relationship and its capacity to achieve positive outcomes. If a pair does not feel compatible, the relationship may not develop and mentees may never feel that they can open up and trust their mentor.

The matching process should focus on the developmental needs of the mentee and consider the relevant characteristics, skills, and interests of both the mentor and mentee in light of those needs (MENTOR, 2015).

The most consistent evidence suggests that matching based on shared interests should take priority. Gender and ethnicity-based matching has yielded more mixed results (DuBois et al., 2011). Further, it is important for both the mentee and mentor to have a say in the match, and that there is an opportunity to do this before a final match is made (Miller, 2010).

Your programme will need to establish a step-by-step procedure for making the match. The practices adopted will vary depending on your programme’s overall goals and desired outcomes. However, in establishing these there are several points to consider:

- What matching criteria will be utilised?
- What forms/paperwork will be used to collect information that will help decide on the match? e.g., application forms; personal profiles; interview responses; reference checks and any other information that may help programme staff in making an appropriate match.
- Who will be responsible for making the match?
- What involvement will parents/caregivers, teachers, or social workers have in the matching process? What involvement will the mentors and the young people have?
- How will the mentors and mentees be informed of the match and formally introduced?

### 5.4.1 Matching criteria

When matching mentors and mentees, the criteria to be considered may include:

- preferences and goals of the young person, mentor and

their parent/caregiver (where appropriate)

- mentor’s experience, skills and expertise
- similarities and shared interests between the mentor and mentee that will assist them in forming a strong bond
- similarity of personality and temperament
- age, gender and ethnicity
- special needs
- any other significant considerations that may be important for the young person, such as religion
- geographic closeness and compatibility of meeting times
- other logistical matters, such as access to transport, internet and phone and holding a current driver’s licence.

Once you have decided on the criteria, ensure your recruitment, safety checking and screening materials are designed to collect the relevant information (application forms, personal profiles, interview responses and reference checks).

### 5.4.2 Matching process

Once the criteria are established, you will need to decide on a suitable process for matching. Some programmes run a group event where prospective mentors and mentees can meet and interact with one another and then provide programme staff with feedback on their match preferences. This practice gives mentors and mentees more say in the matching process leading to greater engagement in the programme and therefore a greater likelihood of longevity and long-term youth outcomes (Karcher, 2008).

If your programme promotes mentor/mentee input into matching, it is important to address the risks of this approach (e.g., feelings of rejection, or how to handle feelings of responsibility when matches fail to bond). Handing over this choice to mentees and mentors should not be seen as a shortcut for programmes – it must be carefully and thoughtfully done.

Other programmes may provide mentees with a selection of mentor profiles for them to review and indicate their preferences commonly referred to as ‘voice and choice’. Similarly, programmes may provide mentors with the mentees’ profiles and ask them to indicate their preferences.

Matching is not a science and sometimes the best matches are not what you expect, so it is important to be open-minded when undertaking this process.

### 5.4.3 Preparation for the initial match meeting

The initial meeting between the mentor and mentee is crucial to ensuring the relationship starts out positively. Investing the time to prepare all parties for this meeting is therefore time well spent. For example, staff may need to spend time getting to know the young people beforehand. It can also be helpful to share information about their potential match with mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers prior to matching. For example:

- Provide mentors with a profile of their prospective mentee, including information relating to risk factors and discuss any associated opportunities/challenges.
- Provide mentees and their parents/caregivers with background information about their selected mentor and discuss what information the family would like to share with the mentor.

If relevant, parents/caregivers should be given an opportunity to express any concerns or provide feedback on the proposed match. This will help with parent engagement and buy-in to the programme.

### 5.4.4 Initial match meeting

Once all parties have been briefed, your programme staff will need to organise the initial meeting between the mentor and mentee and parent/caregiver (when appropriate). This meeting should provide a safe environment for the mentees and mentors

to discuss what they hope to get out of the relationship and to get the relationship off to a positive start. Things to consider when organising the meeting:

- What are the goals for the first meeting?
- How will the meeting be organised to help achieve those goals?
- Who will be present?
- Where will it take place?

Allowing plenty of time for this initial meeting is important, as this will allow mentors and mentees to feel comfortable and start to build a rapport. It may be helpful to include a fun activity designed for them to get to know each other. It is also a good idea to encourage them to set a time for their next catch up.

If practicable, holding the initial meeting at the mentee's home can be very helpful, particularly for community-based programmes where the mentor is likely to be picking their mentee up from their home when doing things together.

Regardless of the location or practice adopted, programme staff should be present to facilitate this initial match meeting and should follow up with all participants to ask how they felt about the match.

### 5.4.5 Match agreement

The initial match meeting provides an excellent opportunity to complete any paperwork including consent forms and a match agreement between the mentor and mentee and parents/caregivers (if appropriate). This agreement demonstrates

## VOICES FROM THE FIELD

### Otago Youth Wellness Trust – 'Johnny Depp was the connection', Dunedin

Bringing two strangers together and inviting them to have a relationship is a tall order! Otago Youth Wellness Trust mentors/programmes co-ordinator Anna Bragg explains, "Young people who opt for a mentor have been linked into our service, working with a caseworker 1:1 for many months, if not longer.

I distinctly remember this one particular matching meeting, when the mentor and I were waiting for the young person, her Mum, and the caseworker to arrive. Eventually the young woman and her Mum could be seen walking into our service. It was very evident that the young person did not want to be attending this meeting and was doing so only under duress. Both the mentor and I shared a rather awkward moment before the young woman and her Mum joined us.

Throughout the meeting the young person was tense and avoidant and seeds of doubt started to sprout... 'Does this young woman really want a mentor? Were we doing to rather than with?' It wasn't until nearing the end of the meeting that the mentor made mention of her love of Johnny Depp, and unbeknown to us the young woman also adored Johnny. Once this connection was made the barrier dropped and a rather animated conversation was shared between mentor and young person around their favourite movies. This was a lovely reminder to me that we can have robust procedures around matching, however you never can actually pinpoint what is going to be the catalyst for the beginnings of the relationship. We need to trust that human beings who are wanting to connect will find all sorts of creative ways to do so!"

their understanding of their respective roles, responsibilities, boundaries and expectations of the relationship, and will help to reinforce the commitment each party is making to the relationship. This is important, as research shows that matches lasting the intended duration of the original commitment is a critical factor in achieving programme outcomes (Grossman & Rhodes, 2002).

The agreement should cover:

- Programme requirements, including the intended duration of the programme and frequency of meetings.
- Roles, responsibilities and expectations of all participants.
- Boundaries of the relationship and confidentiality.

Some programmes invite their mentors and mentees to create a joint agreement where they agree to the goals they are looking to achieve through the relationship. A joint agreement may also include the parent/caregiver and the mentoring agency (in other words, a four-way agreement).

#### Checklist 6. Matching mentors and mentees

Effective mentoring relationships require a good 'fit' between the mentor and mentee. Programmes need to establish a process for making these matches.	CHECK
Identify the <b>key match criteria</b> to utilise when matching mentors and mentees.	
Establish a <b>matching process</b> that best fits your programme's culture e.g., a group event for mentors and mentees to interact, where programme staff can observe potential matches.	
Prepare mentors, mentees and their parents/ caregivers for the <b>initial match meeting</b> to ensure everyone knows what to expect.	
Organise and facilitate the <b>initial match meeting</b> .	
Complete appropriate paperwork including consent forms and a <b>match agreement</b> .	

### VOICES FROM THE FIELD

#### Challenge for Change - the matching process, Wellington

Programme co-ordinator, Jacinta Krefft describes the process Challenge for Change follows to match mentors with mentees.

The first step is that staff involved in mentor training and those who completed the home referral visit, meet to decide the best options for a match. The mentors complete eight training sessions and the home visit is comprehensive, so there is a lot of information. A colour-coded card is prepared with key information for each person, so the process is clear and streamlined.

Considerations such as common interests as well as the resilience and experience of the mentors aligned with the vulnerability and needs of the young person are of primary concern. However we also take into account where the mentor and mentee live and whether or not they have access to a vehicle and other practical considerations.

The mentors find out some key information about the young person they have been matched with at their last training session. They know the suburb where they live, where they go to school, their age, ethnicity, interests and a brief explanation as to why they have been referred. They do not know the young person's name.

We then have a dinner where mentors and mentees meet for the first time. While the parents are being briefed about the Parenting Programme and the Weekend Camp that begins the programme, mentors and mentees withdraw to a separate room. Everyone is given a card with three questions on it. Once all have their cards they begin asking the other mentors or mentees the three questions until they each find the one person in the room who can say 'yes' to all three questions. The questions are about interests, their school/ job and who is in their family. The questions are of a light nature. Even though the matches have been predetermined, having the questions facilitates an experience that feels like they are finding their own mentor. The mentors and mentees have been anticipating this moment for weeks and with the reality of meeting their chosen person so imminent, the atmosphere in the room is electric.

Seeing the connections being made is magical. Once everyone has met their match, they pick up a template to write an acrostic poem together about their interests and hobbies. As all the partnerships are involved in this activity, there is so much inspiration and a sense that a small miracle has occurred.

Once they have finished writing the poems, the mentees take their mentors through to meet their parents, then the evening concludes with everyone eating dinner together.