

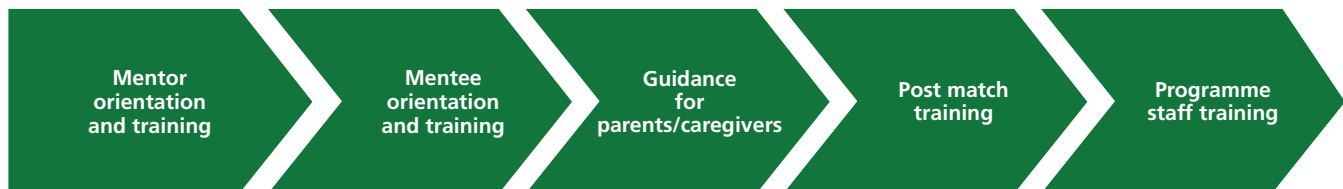
5.3 ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

The way you see people is the way you treat them, and the way you treat them is what they become.

(Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)

OVERVIEW

Figure 9. Orientation and training - key activities



Before commencing a mentoring relationship, prospective mentors, mentees and their parents/caregivers will need training in the basic knowledge, attitudes and skills required to build safe and effective relationships.

For **mentors**, the initial orientation and training session may form part of the safety checking and selection process. This allows potential mentors an opportunity to learn more about the programme, what is expected of mentors, and help them make an informed decision about whether or not to proceed with their application. This initial training also provides an opportunity for programme staff to observe and learn more about potential mentors to determine their suitability.

For **mentees**, the orientation session gives the young person an opportunity to learn more about the programme and what will be expected of them in the relationship. It should outline their roles and responsibilities in language that is appropriate for their age. This knowledge can contribute significantly to the success of the relationship and empower the young person to feel this relationship is equal, rather than having just another adult entering their life telling them what to do.

Parental support of the mentoring relationship can greatly increase the likelihood of success and positive outcomes for the young person (Taylor & Porcellini, 2014).

A clear understanding of everyone's role can help reduce anxiety regarding what things are appropriate and not appropriate for each party to do in the mentoring relationship.

5.3.1 Mentor orientation and training

As highlighted in Section 3, good mentoring relationships require a broad range of skills and attributes, including:

- empathetic listening
- effective communication
- cultural responsiveness
- supporting personal development
- goal setting
- problem solving
- conflict management

Initial orientation and training should cover:

- Programme overview: The programme's goals and desired outcomes for the mentees, specific programme requirements, kaupapa (processes), format and content.
- The basics of mentoring: what it is; what it seeks to achieve and how to be an effective mentor.
- Your role and responsibilities: a clear expectation of the role, the level and nature of engagement and commitment required and boundaries of the relationship.
- Programme ground rules: a clear explanation of allowable activities e.g., for community-based programmes, no overnight stays at the mentor's home; for school-based programme, no meetings with your mentee outside of school, except in school-approved group field trips.
- Programme policies: relating to child protection, confidentiality and disclosure, transportation etc. (refer Section 4.2).
- Culturally-appropriate practices: an understanding of culturally-appropriate practices to help mentors interact effectively with mentees who are from a different culture to their own.
- Explore motivations or goals for being a mentor: help mentors identify their goals and modify any unrealistic expectations.
- Specific information: to address the needs of the young person e.g., mental health; accessing educational pathways.
- Where to go for assistance: programme co-ordinators and support personnel contact details.

The training should also cover essential aspects of the mentoring relationship, and be aligned with the core principles of youth development relationships (refer Section 3).

Guidance on the nature of the relationship expected with parents or caregivers to ensure expectations are clear to everyone involved is helpful. Good communication between the mentor and the parents/caregivers can greatly assist a strong match being established and help achieve positive outcomes (Taylor & Porcellini, 2014).

It is critical that mentors are sensitive to the cultural background of their mentees, and conduct mentoring in a culturally

appropriate and respectful manner. This requires mentors to have a sound knowledge and understanding of the values, priorities, obligations and perspectives of the cultural environment in which they are engaging. A failure to recognise this can have a disempowering effect on young people and can leave them feeling culturally disconnected (Scrine et al., 2012).

Mentors will also need clear guidance on the programme's confidentiality and disclosure policy and procedures, and how to treat information disclosed to them by young people as part of maintaining trust. In particular it will be important for them to understand what information needs to be passed back to programme staff and what actions the programme will take with this information. Therefore, practical training needs to educate on matters of safety and security and bring to life elements of the organisation's child protection policies. Mentors also need to be clear about relationship boundaries.

In addition, it is recommended that mentors are familiar with the following texts, which are fundamental to the youth development sector in Aotearoa New Zealand (refer Appendix C for a summary):

- Youth Development Strategy Aotearoa (YDSA)
- Code of Ethics for Youth Workers in Aotearoa

Potential mentors with previous experience should still complete orientation and training, to ensure they are working from a shared perspective and understand your particular programme's goals and expectations.

Training is also an opportunity to complete any necessary paperwork, distribute training schedules and complete any compulsory consent forms.

Training sessions may also be indicators of a volunteer's commitment to turning up. If they are too busy to attend and the session is at a similar time to when the mentoring will take place, then this should act as a red flag about whether or not they are genuinely committed.

Finally, it is important to maintain records of all training that is undertaken and in particular, records of how and when volunteers are trained in child protection.

5.3.2 Mentee orientation and training

As with mentors, mentees need to have a good understanding of what the programme involves, what they can expect from their mentor, and what is expected in terms of their engagement in the relationship.

Many young people will need time to build engagement and enthusiasm regarding the relationship, but at the outset, their consent and commitment is a necessary requirement.

It is also important young people have a clear understanding of complaints processes, and how to raise any concerns they have. Young people need to be informed of these processes and feel safe in raising concerns and to know that it is okay for relationships with mentors to end early if they are not working for the young person.

To help the relationship to get off to a positive start, programme staff should help young people to understand the potential benefits of being mentored and to set goals for the relationship

which will in turn help build motivation and encourage them to be active contributors to the relationship.

When considering the format for mentee orientation sessions, it may not always be appropriate to run these as group sessions. Rather a meeting with the young person and parents/caregivers may be more suitable.

Mentee orientation should cover these topics:

- Programme overview: the programme's purpose and goals, specific requirements, kaupapa, format and content.
- What is mentoring and how it can benefit them?
- Why they have been chosen for this opportunity.
- A clear understanding of what to expect from the programme, how to engage with the mentor and the programme, and what to do if there are problems.
- Level of commitment required and boundaries of the relationship.
- Programme ground rules, including confidentiality and disclosure.
- Explain how matching with a mentor will happen.
- Confirm and discuss any goals and interests identified in the young person's application.
- Schedule of upcoming activities.
- Complaints process: where to ask for help if they have any concerns about the mentoring relationship.
- Communication that may occur between mentors, teachers, case workers and parents/caregivers about the mentee.
- Effective closure of the mentoring relationship.
- Establish clear pathways for progression to becoming mentors.
- Completion of any consent forms and other paperwork.

5.3.3 Guidance for parents/caregivers

In addition to the topics above, mentoring programmes should also cover the following areas with parents/caregivers:

- Their role in the mentoring relationship.
- Their relationship with the mentor.
- Their goals for the mentoring of their young person.
- Their consent and support for the programme and mentoring relationship.

As noted earlier in this section, for young people under the age of 16, parents/caregivers need to be well-informed about the mentoring relationship and provide their consent. Mentoring relationships always benefit from the commitment and active support of parents and caregivers. Mentors and parents should agree to the location of meetings and anything that requires parent/caregiver consent. Written material covering expectations of the relationship and matters of disclosure and confidentiality should be an integral part of consent forms.

5.3.4 Post-match training

Once the relationship is underway and mentors have some experience, they are likely to have a number of questions about how to handle various situations. Research points to the need for ongoing training and support for mentors to be able to

carry out their role effectively and safely (Scrine et al., 2012).

Ongoing training and support should be tailored to help mentors continue to build their relationships and address specific issues that may arise.

Some key topics that may help mentors to be more effective in their role include:

- An appreciation of how to help young people build resilience. The key factors that foster resilience include: feeling secure, feeling connected, and feeling valued. Initially, resilience can be fostered through positive experiences, and further developed through learning from challenges and mistakes. It can also be developed through participation in community networks or groups, which can help build essential, supportive connections among young people. Massey University's Resilience Research Project is a good source of information: http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/learning/departments/centres-research/resilience-research/resilience-research_home.cfm
- An understanding of adolescent brain development may also help mentors be more effective. The Brainwave Trust is an excellent source of information on brain development and the associated impact of such things as alcohol and drugs. <http://www.brainwave.org.nz/what-we-do/unravelling-the-adolescent-brain-about/>
- Guidance for supporting young people with stress, anxiety and/or depression. The guidelines developed under the Prime Minister's Youth Mental Health Project are a useful resource on these issues. <http://www.msd.govt.nz/about-msd-and-our-work/publications-resources/brochures/guidelines.html>
- Understanding the importance of peer affiliation/relationships and the strong influence they have in shaping young people's behaviours and thoughts. From a mentoring perspective, mentors may be able to support and empower their mentees to be agents of change. For further information on promoting positive peer relationships refer to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/peers.pdf>.

5.3.5 Programme staff training

To ensure that training and support for mentors is of high quality, programme staff will also need ongoing training and development. Professional development plans and adequate supervision for programme staff involved in training and supporting mentors and mentees is crucial for ensuring they have the right skills, experience and support to undertake their role effectively.

Programmes need to stay up to date with any child and young person protection policies and adhere to these at all times.

Checklist 5. Orientation and Training

Before commencing a mentoring relationship, prospective mentors, mentees and their parents/caregivers will need training in the basic knowledge, attitudes and skills required to ensure a safe and effective relationship	CHECK
Develop a comprehensive mentor orientation and training programme that will prepare mentors to confidently perform their mentoring role. Provide sufficient time for mentors to gain an adequate understanding of mentoring.	
Develop a mentee orientation and training programme that will prepare them to participate fully in the mentoring relationship.	
Provide clear guidance to parents/caregivers on their role and responsibilities in the mentoring relationship.	
Provide post-match training to help mentors continue to build their relationships and address specific issues that may arise.	
Maintain training records for all participants, i.e., mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers.	

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

Tuilaepa Youth Mentoring Service (TYMS), West Auckland.

CEO Robson Tavita says 'Developing our staff is just as important as mentoring our young people'

The TYMS Bridge-Back Mentoring programme focuses on addressing the underlying needs of their young people through academic mentoring that is informed by a holistic approach to wellbeing. The programme provides for young people's range of needs and seeks to reflect and engage with their cultural heritage and beliefs. TYMS has a strong partnership approach with aiga, whānau, families, and communities to ensure the young people have positive and ongoing support which reaches beyond its programmes.

Two underlying factors for the programme's success are the post-programme follow up service to ensure there is ongoing support for the young person and continuous support for staff development and training. Staff are empowered, more confident and able to meet the diverse needs of this vulnerable group of Māori and Pasifika youth, many who have only one parent. Cultural aspects of the programme emphasise responsibility to family, peers and community, and that education is the key pathway for success.