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FOSTERING COMMITMENT AND SKILL THROUGH MENTORING PROGRAMS

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Throughout time, mentor–mentee relationships have proven to be effective and meaningful partnerships. In Greek mythology, Homer wrote of a man named Ulysses who went to fight the Trojan War. In his absence, Ulysses asked his trusted friend, Mentor, to guide and advise his young son (Bell, 2002; Brounstein, 2000). The wisdom that Mentor possessed can be seen in other mentors over the years, whereas the eagerness and openness of Ulysses’ son can be seen in other mentees. Socrates mentored Plato, and Aristotle mentored Alexander the Great. Henry David Thoreau found a mentor in Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Helen Keller found her mentor in Anne Sullivan. In politics, we have seen Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., mentor Jesse Jackson. In athletics, Bob Kersee gave mentorship to Florence Griffith Joyner. Even in movies and television, we have grown to admire and appreciate the strength of the mentoring relationships between Yoda and Luke Skywalker (*The Empire Strikes Back*); Professor Helinger and John Forbes Nash, Jr. (*A Beautiful Mind*); and Richie Cunningham and Arthur Fonzairelli (*Happy Days*) (Carr, 2002). This chapter identifies the importance of creating and implementing mentoring programs in community human services organizations. It describes the essential components of a good mentorship program and explains the benefits of a successful quality mentorship program. It provides suggestions for how to develop, build commitment to, implement, and monitor effective mentoring programs. It also examines the roles of stakeholders in supporting mentorship programs.

TARGETED FRONT-LINE SUPERVISOR COMPETENCIES

Front-line supervisors (FLSs) are responsible for ensuring that direct support professionals (DSPs) are well trained and competent. FLSs also coordinate personnel to ensure that what needs to get done gets done.

Primary Skills

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FLSs coordinate and participate in DSP training and in-service sessions by orienting new staff, arranging for staff to attend training and in-service sessions, maintaining training records, and supporting ongoing staff development.

FLSs provide orientation and answer questions from new staff through a variety of formal and informal instructional and learning activities.

FLSs identify potential trainers and provide resources, coaching, and opportunities for DSP training.

Related Skills

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FLSs coordinate personnel management by hiring new staff, conducting performance reviews, facilitating teamwork and staff meetings, creating job descriptions, delegating tasks and responsibilities, encouraging effective communication, defusing crises and conflicts between staff, and implementing grievance and formal contract procedures.

FLSs may complete salary reviews or make recommendations regarding pay increases. FLSs may also identify other means of compensation, opportunities for promotion, and staff celebrations and discuss these with managers, depending upon the management structure at their specific organization.

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FLSs attend and actively participate in organization management, planning, and cross-functional work group meetings.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

One of the biggest challenges in reducing turnover is to address leaving among newly employed staff members. Employee turnover is most common among newly hired DSPs. One study found that 23% of new employees in small group homes left in the first 3 months after hire and a total of 53% had left within the first year (Larson, Lakin & Bruininks, 1998; see also Chapter 3). Another study found that lower satisfaction with informal co-worker support was strongly correlated with higher turnover among part-time employees with less than 12 months of service in community residential support settings (Bachelder & Braddock, 1994). This chapter examines mentoring as a specific strategy to improve socialization of newcomers and to improve support for skill development for inexperienced employees.

Most people have observed or participated in various mentoring relationships during their lifetime. But, for many people, these relationships did not occur in work environments. In a study discussed by Chip Bell (2002), 35% of employees reported they were not receiving mentoring opportunities from their employer and that they were planning to obtain a different job within a year. Another study reported that 45% of newly hired business graduates had a mentor or sponsor available to them (Louis, Posner, & Powell, 1983). In New York City, 12 of 24 organizations supporting individuals with disabilities used peer mentoring with at least some employees (Ebenstein & Gooler, 1993).

Bell (2002) reported that when he began to study mentoring in the 1970s, there was virtually nothing written about the topic. He began his discovery of mentorship after reading an article called “Much Ado about Mentors” (Roche, 1979), which stated that four of five CEOs of Fortune 500 companies attributed a significant proportion of their success to having had a mentor (Bell, 2002). Approximately 20 years after

Roche's article was published, Brounstein (2000) reported that there were still very few books dedicated to this important area of staff support and cultivation. Instead, mentorship information is tucked in the crevices and corners of various management, leadership, and personnel resources. Brounstein suggested that what people want are books with specific strategies and techniques presented in a clear and concise manner to assist them in starting mentoring programs at their own organizations.

In considering the application of mentoring principles in community human services, it is important to review the context for such progress. Supervisors are often viewed as the crux of quality in a given program. Supervisors affect whether DSPs stay or leave (see Chapter 1). Supervisors have difficult jobs that sometimes feel impossible because employees are geographically spread out and work different shifts. For many supervisors, training, supporting, and developing employees are overwhelming tasks. Developing mentors who can support, train, and develop DSPs can be a tremendous help to supervisors.

Definition of Mentoring

There are numerous types of mentoring and various reasons to have mentoring programs within organizations. The two primary purposes of mentoring are 1) to support and socialize an employee to have a successful employment experience and to move toward certain career goals and 2) to support an employee in developing certain skills. Mentoring programs are used within many types of organizations and businesses, including religious organizations, Fortune 500 companies, nonprofit organizations, as well as community human services settings.

For the purposes of this chapter, we define mentoring as “a deliberate pairing of more skilled or experienced professionals with a lesser skilled or experienced [professional]. . . . to help the lesser skilled person grow, become socialized into his/her new role within the agency, and to develop specific competencies” (O’Neill, Hewitt, Sauer, & Larson, 2001, p. 4 of the Introduction to the Learner Guide). Mentoring provides natural and safe opportunities for the mentee and mentor to share positive and negative experiences, fears, thoughts, mistakes, and knowledge and creates an open and honest learning and teaching environment for mentee and mentor alike.

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR SOLUTIONS

Organizations that use mentorship programs in which all levels of the organizations actively participate, regularly evaluate, redefine, and commit themselves to the program have greater success in keeping their employees (Taylor, Sauer, Hewitt, O’Neill, & Larson, 2001). Imagine that you are a newly hired employee in an organization that operates 10 supported living programs. On your first day you meet your supervisor, receive an employee handbook, and watch a 30-minute welcome video. Your supervisor explains to you that the organization requires 3 full days of training before working in a home. You appreciate the thoroughness of the organization’s training plan and eagerly attend the 3-day training. On your first day after training, the supervisor assigns you to a home and tells you where the files are and that you will find everything you need in the staff cabinet. Feeling isolated, scared, and unsure of what to expect,

you venture to your new work site alone. You find the staff cabinets but there is little information about which tasks you are responsible for or how to go about doing them. You suddenly think to yourself that you do not like this job and that you feel uncomfortable without any support or further help from the organization. Wouldn't it be better if you were to have someone to call or to work with for the first couple of days? Of course it would! A mentorship program is designed to prevent the feeling of isolation and confusion described in this type of situation.

The benefits of mentorship programs are numerous. Although organizations each implement mentorship programs differently, many of the benefits described in Table 8.1 are generalizable across organizations. One of the greatest benefits is that mentoring programs can be effective at reducing turnover and preventing burnout. A study of a mentoring program for 120 beginning teachers in Los Angeles documented that retention in the first 3 years increased from 78% to 95% for teachers who had mentors (Colbert & Wolff, 1992). When employees feel supported and listened to and when they have the skills they need to do their job, they stay with the organization longer. In addition, mentoring programs provide a sense of community among new employees and help them to learn the organization's values, mission, and vision. When employees understand and are committed to striving for the desired vision, the people who receive supports are more likely to experience a better quality of life.

New employees also have much to gain by participating in a mentoring program. Feelings of isolation, uncertainty, and fear can be greatly reduced when these employees have a mentor from whom they can seek guidance. A person who is experienced and "in the know" looks out for them and helps them not only learn needed skills to do their job but also learn "the ropes" or how things are done at the organization and the other informal processes and procedures that are never described in policy manuals. Mentors are helpful in providing information about employees' roles and organizational features such as politics, procedures, and policies. Studies have found that employees with mentors had more information about their roles and the organization than those who did not have mentors (Lankau & Scandura, 2002; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1993). A study of 1,162 people who had a mentor found that mentees who had a highly satisfying informal or formal mentoring relationship reported greater job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and career commitment and less intent to quit than those who reported marginal or dissatisfying mentoring relationships and those who did not have a mentor (Ragins, Cotton, & Miller, 2000).

Employees with mentors also have a place to turn when things go wrong. In community services, crises may occur and unusual circumstances may pop up unexpectedly. Truly no day is ever the same as the day before. Having a mentor can help employees when they are faced with new experiences that may cause anxiety, fear, anger, or frustration. Such experiences often result in employees' deciding to leave an organization. When a mentor is there to listen, draw on his or her experiences, and provide advice to employees, those anxieties and fears are reduced.

Mentors also benefit from mentoring programs. Being called on to share experiences and offer support to others may feel like a vote of confidence. Being a mentor is a way to be recognized for being excellent at what one does. Often this reward can spark a new interest in the work and prevent burnout. This is more likely to occur if

Table 8.1. Benefits of mentorship programs

Key stakeholder	Benefits of mentorship to those key people
Organization	Low-cost method to communicate vision, mission, and recommended practice Better-quality supports Development of employees Increased retention and reduced turnover Stronger employee commitment
New hires	Accumulated knowledge and experience of mentor Safe opportunity for feedback Occasion to discuss anxiety and concerns Social connections with others Decreased feelings of isolation Access to information Guidance on norms
Mentors	Recognition for skills and abilities Opportunities to develop new skills and advancement Renewed interest in job Raises, bonuses, and rewards
Supported individuals	Better services Less turnover Positive long-term relationships

Source: Taylor, Sauer, Hewitt, O’Neill, & Larson, 2001.

the mentors are carefully selected from a group of volunteers and if they are rewarded with a bonus, an increase in pay, or another tangible item.

In the end, when organizations, employees, and mentors gain, the people who receive support gain as well. When employees have the skills they need, are supported, and are rewarded, organizations function better and the people who receive services are much more likely to experience quality support.

STRATEGIES FOR RESPONDING TO THE PROBLEM

To set up a successful mentorship program, first the organization must clearly define in writing the mission, goals, and outcomes of the program. Next, the organization must build commitment to the mentorship program by developing the needed training, incentives, flexibility, time, and supports for employees to participate in the program. The organization should define the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders in the mentorship program. Only after doing all this is it time to actually develop and implement the program. The final step is to evaluate the program as needed.

Define the Mentoring Program’s Mission, Goals, and Outcomes

Developing a mission for a mentoring program helps to focus its purpose. A possible mission for an organization’s mentoring program could be “to enhance DSPs’ skills, competence and commitment to the organization by providing support, guidance, and training through a planned mentoring program.” Another relevant mission could be

to reduce turnover. Defining the mentoring program's goals also includes describing what changes (outcomes) are desired and how that change can be measured and documented. The goal may be to reduce turnover, improve employee job satisfaction, or increase the knowledge of DSPs.

Build Commitment

It is one thing to talk about and plan for a mentoring program. It is much more difficult to actually make it happen. For a program to be effective, it must have buy-in from all stakeholders and must have the full support of the people within the organization who make decisions and control resources. Important stakeholders include DSPs, FLSSs, managers, people who receive supports and their families, and human resources personnel. Stakeholders in positions of power, such as administrators, managers, and boards of directors, must show their commitment by providing financial support, creating incentives, allowing time away from work duties for mentorship participants, and so forth. Following are some suggestions for securing commitment from these groups of people:

- *Ensure that someone from upper management or administration is involved in the development process for the mentoring program.* Doing so will prevent much time and energy from being wasted. If decision makers are involved from the beginning, they will likely be more comfortable during the implementation and evaluation phases.
- *Seek to identify the financial resources available for marketing, training events, and incentives to mentors and mentees early in the development process.* As with any new program, there are various and hidden costs. The costs may be for program marketing (e.g., fliers, informational meetings), introductory training for mentors (e.g., replacements on the job while mentors are training, refreshments, mentors' training time), and for incentives for participants (e.g., bonuses, raises, other tangible items). Figure out the budget, and build the program within these means.
- *Schedule for the mentors and mentees to have time away from their duties to get together.* Mentors and mentees will need time to meet and to share. In community human services, this likely means that the desired outcome of the mentorship program will have to be authorized by someone in the organization or that a certain amount of flexible time will need to be built into participants' weekly schedules. If there is no time for mentors and mentees to get together, the relationships will not be effective, and the mentoring program will fail.
- *Involve DSPs and individuals receiving supports and their family members in planning and implementing the mentoring program.* If DSPs are to be mentors, it is important to get their input throughout the planning and implementation process. This can be accomplished by including DSPs in planning groups and evaluation activities and getting feedback from focus groups. It is also important to get input from individuals receiving supports and their family members because they are affected by the quality of supports provided by the organization.
- *Solicit short news briefs or newsletter articles from the CEO or administrators regarding the mentoring programs.* One way to convey commitment on the part of the administrators is to ask them to participate in the making of the mentoring program. They can be invited to write about it, share their experiences with mentoring relationships, or be involved in informational sessions about the program.

Building commitment toward the mentoring program is critical because different people within the organization may have very different ideas about the program's purpose. Ensure that everyone agrees on the purpose or desired outcome of the program.

Outline Roles and Responsibilities

Organizations with successful mentorship programs clearly define the roles and responsibilities of program stakeholders at all levels of their organizations (Taylor et al., 2001).

Organization

The organization's role is to promote and foster the development and growth of the mentorship program to the fullest extent by demonstrating commitment to the mentorship program in all actions. Organizations are responsible for educating all staff about the mentorship program, providing participation opportunities, and continually identifying mentors and mentees for the program. Organizations also support their mentorship program by allowing time for the mentor and mentee to meet. The organization's role includes selecting people to become mentors. In doing so, it is important to convey to the chosen mentors that they have been identified to be mentors based on their previous experience and excellent professional conduct. Some organizations require mentors to have had at least a year of experience in their current position, to have not been subject to negative disciplinary action within the past year, to have demonstrated competence in all aspects of their current position, and to show a willingness to participate in the program. When communicating to mentors that they have been selected, the organization should let them know that they are among the few who were chosen and that it is an honor to have been selected. The mentor selection process should instill a shared sense of accomplishment, pride, and ownership among the chosen mentors.

Managers

Managers' support for the mentorship program can make or break the success of the program (O'Neill, Hewitt, et al., 2001). The role of the management team is to be an active participant in the mentorship program by 1) talking positively about the mentoring program and encouraging support for it, 2) encouraging supervisors and DSPs to volunteer to become mentors, 3) encouraging supervisors to foster the mentoring relationships between DSPs and their mentors, and 4) scheduling time for mentors and mentees to meet. All managers' actions model their commitment to and the value that they see in the mentorship program.

Supervisors

The role of an FLS in a mentorship program is similar to that of a manager. Supervisors are to be active participants in the mentorship program by 1) encouraging DSPs to participate in the program; 2) communicating a willingness to provide support, if needed, during the development of the mentor-mentee relationship; and 3) evaluating whether mentees are developing the skills needed to perform the identified roles and responsibilities related to their direct support positions.

Mentors

The role of a mentor is to create and foster a safe and open atmosphere in which the mentee feels comfortable to share his or her dreams, fears, concerns, and experiences.

Mentors' active listening skills create and foster teaching and learning experiences. Following are some other skills needed by mentors:

- Mentors possess clear understanding of their organization's mission statement, values, policies, and procedures.
- Mentors act in accordance with the organization's mission statement and values in their daily work conduct.
- Mentors continually demonstrate appropriate professional skills, abilities, and judgment.
- Mentors have good problem-solving skills and can see multiple solutions and options for protégés when they are faced with a problem.
- Mentors know when and why to refer a mentee to his or her supervisor for direction.

Mentors provide feedback to mentees, celebrate the successes of mentees, and share what worked in similar situations. Mentors share information about particular approaches or techniques that work better to enhance the quality of life for people they support. Mentors can help mentees figure out new or different approaches to use with the people they support, their co-workers, or their supervisor. Mentors also provide role modeling, acceptance, counseling, and friendship (Kram, 1983).

Mentors create opportunities for mentees to learn from experiences by identifying how these experiences relate to the organization's mission, values, policies, and procedures. Successful mentors have a goal of building the mentees' motivation, drive, and commitment to reaching the next level of professionalism in providing respectful, meaningful, and quality supports to the people they serve. Each mentee has different social support needs. When a mentor provides the amount and kind of social support the mentee expects, the mentee is more likely to perceive the relationship as effective and to trust the mentor (Young & Perrewe, 2000). In striving to reach this goal with the mentee, the mentor may use several techniques, including active listening, sharing of professional experiences, shadowing, role-playing, role-modeling, posing questions, giving research and educational assignments, and referring the mentee to other resources. Mentors may need training to develop these skills.

It is important for mentors to understand that mentees need varying amounts of time to feel safe to share fears, mistakes, concerns, and other matters. A mentor cannot control how quickly and to what extent a mentee will exhibit this openness. Mentors can use certain methods, however, to increase the likelihood that mentees are willing to share experiences. One strategy is to explore previous experiences a mentee has had with mentoring. This may generate conversations regarding what the mentee understands about mentorship programs and his or her expectations for the program, and it may open the door for the mentor to explain to how the organization's mentoring program may differ from other programs. The mentor may also share some of the difficulties she or he experienced when starting the job and briefly describe how he or she overcame these difficulties. Another strategy is for the mentor to consistently convey that the relationship between him or her and the mentee is safe, open, and confidential. The mentor can explain to the mentee that what is said between them will not be part of the mentee's performance appraisal, even though at times the mentor may review with the mentee the organization's procedures, expectations, and policies.

The mentor can use many strategies to increase the effectiveness of the mentoring process. Asking the mentee to set up the first mentorship meeting with his or her mentor and supervisor ensures that the mentee takes ownership for the process. The purpose of having the mentee's supervisor at the first meeting is to make sure that a sound foundation is created by reviewing roles and responsibilities and defining the outcomes that are expected from the mentoring process. One important clarification is for the supervisor and the mentor to clearly explain that the mentor will not be reporting to the supervisor what the mentee discusses or how the mentee is doing. Mentorship meetings should be held in a room that is private, quiet, and free from interruption, thus encouraging open, honest sharing and interactions. Mentors may ask their mentees to come to scheduled meetings with a list of items they would like to discuss. Such a strategy helps the mentees to know what to expect. The mentor needs to ensure that sessions remain focused and target the development of new skills and assimilation into the organizational culture.

Last, to facilitate a trusting and open relationship, the mentor should make an effort to follow up on requests and tasks requested of the mentee. Mentors will know they are being successful in their roles when they see a trusting relationship developing, with the mentees "disclosing their own professional challenges, mistakes, and insights they have gained from their mentors and their professional experiences" (Taylor et al., 2001).

Mentees

The roles of the mentee are that of learner, listener, and active participant in his or her professional development as a DSP.

- Mentees clearly identify their professional goals.
- Mentees identify professional areas in which they need or want to grow.
- Mentees share professional experiences with their mentors.
- Mentees complete and review all assignments or tasks that are required in the mentoring program.

Mentees who are open to sharing their experiences and their fears, thoughts, and concerns about their positions as DSPs report gaining more from their mentors than those who are more hesitant (O'Neil, Hewitt, et al., 2001).

An important component of a successful mentee–mentor relationship is that the mentee understands that his or her role includes asking questions on an ongoing basis and soliciting professional suggestions from the mentor. Mentees seek and remain engaged in learning opportunities by making observations, seeking new information, and trying new strategies or skills. Often, mentees seek support from their mentors by expressing what they see as their own personal needs, goals, and desires and then getting suggestions from mentors on how to fulfill these.

A mentee may use the mentoring program to learn about organization protocols, procedures, and informal organizational cultural rules, and he or she may learn problem-solving techniques that are effective within his or her work environments. Often mentees use their time with mentoring to seek suggestions for how to interact with the people to whom they provide support. Understanding the history of the people supported, their network of friends and family, and how each person is supported by the

organization are all common topics associated with mentoring relationships. The mentoring time is also often spent problem-solving co-worker conflict.

Develop and Implement the Program

Once sufficient commitment from organization stakeholders is acquired to develop and support a mentoring program, it is time to begin crafting the actual program. There are a number of important components for any given mentoring program (see Table 8.2).

Evaluate the Mentoring Program

The evaluation of the mentorship program must be part of the program's routine up-keep and maintenance. As the organization experiences changes in staff, individuals supported, workforce issues, and legislative mandates, the mentorship program may need modifications to preserve its high-quality results and effectiveness. The development of the program evaluation should begin *prior* to the commencement of the program. This strategic approach to evaluation means that the organization measures what it truly intended to measure rather than whatever data are available at evaluation time. In other words, the organization should be purposeful in collecting data instead of just measuring random outcomes as an afterthought.

When developing evaluation for a mentoring program, the organization should look at why the mentoring program has been implemented (the program's mission and goals). The organization should be sure to specifically define how progress toward these goals will be measured. Once the areas of measurement have been decided upon, the organization must determine a way to collect the data that it is interested in. Chapter 13 provides detailed information about how to measure and assess desired outcomes.

Cost-Effectiveness

Determining the cost-effectiveness of the mentoring program is one way to evaluate the program. An ongoing account must be kept of all expenses that the organization incurs to implement the mentorship program. These expenses could include the training hours for mentors, the payroll amounts attributed to time spent away from job tasks for meetings between mentors and mentees, bonuses or rewards paid to mentors, the training or shadowing time that mentees spend during their orientation, time spent in mentee-mentor meetings, and so forth. With this information, the organization can calculate the total cost of implementing the mentorship program. Next, the organization must determine whether staff turnover rates were reduced and how much money this reduction saved. As retention increases, organizations are able to save considerable amounts of money that would otherwise have been spent on recruiting, hiring, and training new staff. The organization can subtract the cost of implementing the mentorship program from the total savings due to reduced staff turnover; the result shows the cost-effectiveness of the mentorship program.

Staff Knowledge

Evaluating the increase in staff knowledge or in staff satisfaction may be more difficult than evaluating cost-effectiveness in some circumstances. For this type of information,

Table 8.2. Essential components of successful mentorship programs

Middle managers and supervisors understand the purpose and procedures of the mentorship program and show support for the program. Middle managers and supervisors are very influential in the work lives of their employees. They need training in how to select mentors, how to schedule mentorship sessions, and how to offer time for commuting and other tasks associated with the program. It is essential for middle managers and supervisors to be familiar with the program.

A coordinator has been selected to market the program, screen mentors, arrange and track matches, train mentors and mentees, monitor and support program activities, evaluate the program, and advocate for ongoing program support. Implementing a mentoring program requires a significant investment of time and energy. Having a designated coordinator who will champion the program is a critical component of an effective program.

Mentors and mentees understand why they were chosen for participation. They know the purpose behind the program. When the program is being developed, it is critical for mentors and mentees to understand why they were chosen. The program description and guidelines should clearly state the selection standards. There should be a basis for determining who is invited and who is not. If certain positions or sites in the organization involve high stress programs, all people who work in these positions or sites may be assigned a mentor.

Careful consideration is given to how to match mentors with mentees. Mentors and mentees can be matched in many ways (e.g., work location, characteristics of people supported, demographic characteristics). Consider all of the options and give some thought to the matching process. Planning ahead for the matches will improve the overall mentoring program.

Mentors, mentees, supervisors, and managers have a clear understanding of their roles. It may be helpful to create mentorship job descriptions for everyone involved in the program. People need clear explanations to do what they are supposed to do. Mentors and mentees may want to create a time-limited professional development plan with an agreement about mutual responsibilities, developmental goals, meeting frequency, and length of mentorship and an outline of activities to help the mentee to meet his or her goals.

Mentors and mentees make a solid commitment to participate in the program. In developing a program, be sure to figure out how the mentor and mentee can pledge their commitment. For example, they may simply sign a form that says they agree to these new roles for a certain period of time. Whatever the format, be certain that this commitment exists. This written commitment can screen out participants who are unlikely to fulfill their obligations to the program.

Mentors have regular opportunities to meet one another to get support and training and to celebrate program successes. Monthly or bimonthly gatherings for mentors in which they discuss challenges, reflect on their experiences, celebrate their successes, and strengthen and improve the overall mentoring program are important.

Implementation is carefully planned and piloted before organizationwide implementation occurs. Organizationwide implementation can be difficult. It is often helpful to pilot the program in a small number of sites before implementing it organizationwide. When selecting pilot sites, consider excitement and level of support and commitment to the mentoring program.

The mentorship program is evaluated, and the program is modified regularly based on evaluation findings. No program remains the same over time. Decide up front what aspects are important to evaluate and how these features will be evaluated. Then as the program evolves, refer back to those goals to be sure that the changes are consistent with the original intent.

See *The Peer Empowerment Program (PEP)*; Taylor, Sauer, Hewitt, O'Neill, & Larson, 2001) for details about the tasks described in this table.

an organization cannot simply rely upon numbers and calculations; instead, it must design a way to collect information about the areas that it is interested in. Two ways to collect such data are through surveys and/or exit interviews. The organization can collect this data through verbal interviews or by using paper- or computer-based questionnaires. Two examples of exit interview questionnaires for peer mentoring programs are provided at the end of this chapter.

As the organization gathers data from the exit interviews, specific areas of strengths and weakness of the program may begin to appear in the participants' responses. If an aspect of the program is continually receiving negative feedback in the exit interviews, the organization can reevaluate how that part of the program is being run and can make the necessary adjustments. For example, if the majority of mentor interviews result in feedback concerning a lack of preparedness, the organization will need to provide mentors with increased training on their roles, responsibilities, and available resources. If feedback from exit interviews show that mentees didn't feel they saw their mentor often enough because the mentor worked at a different site, perhaps the organization needs to change its matching process to include the work site as a criteria for the matching of mentors and mentees.

In the Spotlight: Hammer Residences

Traci LaLiberte

Hammer Residences is located in the Twin Cities Metro area of Minnesota. Currently, Hammer Residences serves over 140 individuals with developmental disabilities through its residential services program. In addition to residential services, Hammer Residences also provides in-home support services, support coordination services, and supported employment services.

The mentoring programs for supervisors and DSPs at Hammer Residences are coordinated by a full-time staff member in the human resources department. The mentoring process begins with a 4-hour training session for anyone wishing to be a mentor. During this training, trainers discuss what mentoring is and is not. Trainers use role plays so that participants can learn about boundaries and understanding the concerns of the mentee. It is emphasized that the mentor is *not* a trainer, although some training does naturally occur during the mentoring sessions. Mentors receive a one-time \$200 incentive, as well as a small amount of petty cash for activities with their mentee, such as going out for coffee. A mentor-mentee pairing is designed to last 6 months. During this period, mentors keep a log of activities and time spent with the mentee. Hammer Residences also uses an evaluation form that the mentor and mentee complete at the end of the 6-month time frame.

When a new supervisor is appointed, Hammer Residences' program directors pair a trained mentor with the new supervisor based on personality; personal interests; and organization elements, such as which home the new supervisor will be working in and which home the mentor has previously worked in. An ideal match occurs if the mentor was previously a supervisor in the home where the mentee will be working because the mentor is well equipped to assist the mentee in assimilating into his or her new role and surroundings.

Hammer Residences has been fortunate in that it has encountered little to no challenges. Staff were able to learn, however, from challenges they have faced in the mentor-

ship program for DSPs. Participating DSPs and mentors found it difficult to find time to meet with one another. Some DSPs reported that they felt offended that a mentor was automatically assigned to them as they felt they knew what they were doing in their role as DSP and did not want a mentor. Hammer Residences reevaluated its DSP mentoring program and whether all newly hired DSPs should be assigned a mentor. When DSPs are matched with mentors, consideration is also now given to each DSP's self-esteem and how the mentoring relationship is introduced.

Overall, Hammer Residences is committed to its mentoring programs and has found great success in the relationships formed and the retention of those completing the 6-month program. The mentoring program has become an integral part of the organization's plan for hiring, training, and retaining employees.

For additional information about Hammer Residences's mentoring program, contact Kim Hansen at 952-473-1261.

OVERCOMING IMPLEMENTATION BARRIERS

Although the benefits far outweigh the challenges of creating a mentorship program, the challenges are worth mentioning here so that organizations can be mindful of them and plan accordingly. First, diversity plays a role anytime staff members get together for partnerships. Diversity should be part of the mentor–mentee matching criteria, either by matching people who are different from one another or by matching those who have similar life experiences. DSPs are individuals and therefore bring with them many different ways of communicating, learning, and dealing with problems. Mentors and mentees do not necessarily have to be paired with someone who has the same learning style or communication style, but it is important for the organization to be aware of differences while creating matches.

Second, the organization needs to be aware and committed to the amount of time and resources required to create a successful mentorship program. A study conducted in New York City reported that only 33% of organizations with mentoring programs said their program was extremely or usually effective (Ebenstein & Gooler, 1993). Major challenges included lack of advancement opportunities for those who were mentored (88%), not enough time for the mentoring experience (33%), and resentment from others who did not have a mentor (33%). Clearly, an organization that expects a successful mentorship program but resists providing the appropriate time and resources to make it succeed will have difficulties. Without a true commitment to the mentoring program up front, including commitment from the organization's decision makers, it might be prudent to delay development of the mentoring program to cultivate the required support.

Another obstacle faced by some organizations is a tendency to start too big and without thought. When creating a mentoring program, it is important to remember that mentors need training, processes have to be developed, the program has to be marketed, and so forth. Starting with a small pilot program and then making organization-wide change may help prevent the organization from having a big “kickoff to failure.” Working out the glitches in small numbers is always easier than in large numbers.

The *Peer Empowerment Program* (Taylor et al., 2001) includes a helpful list of do's and don'ts for a mentoring program (see Table 8.3). One common mistake is to force people to be involved in the mentoring program. If an organization forces people to be

Table 8.3. Do's and don'ts of implementing and evaluating a peer mentoring program

Do	Don't
View mentors as leaders	Expect the program to run on its own
Provide incentives to mentors	Use mentoring to replace orientation training
Offer frequent opportunities for celebration and recognition of mentors and mentees	Use mentoring to replace supervision
Create time-limited partnerships	Ask people to mentor without preparation
Ensure that partners have specific goals	Force people to become mentors (this invites sabotage or ineffectiveness)
Empower mentors and mentees to direct the program	Expect mentors to do the extra work of participating without incentives
Ensure CEO support of mentoring activities	
Coordinate and support the mentoring program	
Provide ongoing support to mentors	
Publicly announce criteria for selecting program participants	

From Taylor, M., Sauer J., Hewitt, A., O'Neill, S., & Larson, S. (2001). *The peer empowerment program (PEP): A complete toolkit for planning and implementing mentoring programs within community-based human service organizations* (p. 8 of facilitator guide). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living; adapted by permission.

mentors, they may be less motivated, and if it forces new employees to have a mentor, the new employees may not value the experience as much. Making the program voluntary and strongly encouraging its use avoids these potential obstacles. The challenges noted in this chapter are just a few examples of those that a mentorship program might face during design and implementation. Remember to plan for potential challenges so that they are less likely to become barriers to establishing a successful program.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

1. If your organization were to initiate a mentoring program, who would be responsible for the facilitation and oversight of the program?
2. How could your organization provide the best support to mentors so that they are encouraged to participate and strive toward the program goals?
3. What resources (direct and indirect costs) are you prepared to invest in training and supporting mentors and mentees?
4. With an increase in workforce diversity, what can your organization do to best meet the needs of new employees through the mentor program?
5. How will you know if your organization's mentoring program is successful?

CONCLUSION

Peer mentoring programs can help to improve both socialization and training for DSPs in community human services settings. Good mentoring relationships are consistently associated with lower turnover, increased job satisfaction, and improved organizational commitment for mentees. Well-developed mentorship programs require planning and commitment on behalf of the organization. A program's mission, goals,

and outcomes should be defined. The roles and responsibilities of the mentor, mentee, and the organization should be established *prior* to implementation of the program. Finally, program evaluation plans should also be designed prior to the commencement of the mentorship program.

RESOURCES

A Guide to the Mentor Program Listings, <http://www.mentors.ca/mentorprograms.html>

This web page has a comprehensive list of mentor programs being implemented in a variety of settings. Interested readers can search the descriptions of mentor programs by category of interest. Each entry lists contact information for the mentor program.

Brounstein, M. (2000). *Coaching and mentoring for dummies*. Foster City, CA: IDG Books Worldwide.

This straightforward and easy-to-read reference book is available in most bookstores.

Kaye, B., & Scheef, D. (2000). *Mentoring. Info-line*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training and Development. (Available from the publisher, <http://store.astd.org/product.asp?prodid=1264&deptid=4>)

This easy-to-read handbook provides a quick overview of what constitutes an effective mentoring program and provides suggestions for successful program development.

Taylor, M., Sauer, J., Hewitt, A., O'Neil, S., & Larson, S. (2001). *The peer empowerment program (PEP): A complete toolkit for planning and implementing mentoring programs within community-based human service organizations* (Program coordinator, facilitator, and learner guides). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, Institute on Community Integration, Research and Training Center on Community Living. (Available from the publisher, 612-624-4512; <http://rtc.umn.edu/wddsp/dol.html>)

This curriculum is designed to train supervisors and managers to design, implement, and evaluate peer mentoring programs. The program coordinator guide provides the information and tools needed to plan and develop the program. The facilitator guide contains the materials needed to orient and train mentors and mentees. The learner guide contains worksheets and handouts for the orientation session and provides a workbook for mentors who participate in a training workshop.

Mentoring Program Exit Interview for Mentors

Please tell us a little bit about yourself and your career.

Where do you work? _____

How long have you worked there? _____

How long were you a mentor? _____

How long has the person you mentored been working for the organization? _____

Please tell us about your experience with the mentoring program.

Do you feel you were an effective mentor? _____

Did you have enough support from your organization to be an effective mentor? _____

Did the training adequately prepare you for your role as a mentor? _____

Do you feel that the person you mentored is better prepared for his or her role? Why or why not?

What benefits did *you* experience as a mentor? _____

What would help make the experience better or more effective? _____

Would you consider being a mentor again? _____

Mentoring Program Exit Interview for Mentees

Please tell us a little bit about yourself and your career.

Where do you work? _____

How long have you worked there? _____

How long were you a mentee? _____

How long has the person who mentored you been working for the organization? _____

Please tell us about your experience with the mentoring program.

Do you feel your mentor was effective? _____

Did you and your mentor have enough support from your organization to have an effective partnership?

Do you feel that you are better equipped for your job as a result of being mentored? _____

What benefits did you experience as a mentee? _____

What would help make the experience better? _____

Would you consider being a mentee again? Do you plan to become a mentor? _____
