

MENTORING TRAINING

*Mentors can give new or existing volunteers the extra encouragement and support they need to be the best they can and increase retention rates.*

**What is a Mentor?**

A mentor is a caring and committed volunteer willing to support and help improve other volunteers in your club. By spending a few hours a week sharing activities, listening, encouraging, challenging, and building skills and self-reliance, volunteer mentors can help volunteers from the beginning through to achieving success no matter how that is measured.

**Why Mentor?**

Consider becoming a mentor if you enjoy spending time with other volunteers and are concerned about their success. Clubs benefit from a spectrum of community support that includes adult role models from all walks of life. People often become mentors to:

1. Make a difference to another volunteer;
2. Gain a sense of fulfillment from helping other people;
3. Help volunteers increase their success;
4. Ensure volunteers are aware of their role in the club.

**How Can I be Most Effective as a Mentor?**

* **Be an advocate and a role model.**

Your role is not to replace club committees or serve as an authority figure but to offer direction and support.

* **Be consistent and maintain regular contact.**

Volunteering for the first time can be difficult for people in the club and they will really appreciate the contact from a mentor. One of the best ways to build trust is to be a patient and regular presence with the volunteer but also allow them to think for themselves also.

* **Set realistic goals and expectations.**

Work to build a trusting relationship first. Changes such as improved coaching performance take time. Achieving short-term goals (e.g., taking the warm up) can build confidence and motivation to tackle long term goals.

* **Give your mentee voice and choice in deciding on activities.**

Provide a range of activity choices for the volunteer role. People feel more invested in the relationship if they can exercise some control.

* **Be positive.**

Offer frequent encouragement and expressions of direct confidence. Notice and remark on positive behaviours.

* **Let your mentee have control over what the two of you talk about — and how you talk about it.**

Be sensitive to the volunteer’s cues. Don’t push for confidences or fire too many questions at your mentee.

* **Listen.**

“Just listening” is a critical form of emotional support.

* **Respect the trust your mentee places in you.**

Respond in ways that show you see your mentee’s side of things. Give advice sparingly. Maintain confidentiality.

* **Remember that you are responsible for building the relationship.**

Take responsibility for making and maintaining contact. Understand that the volunteer may not give mentors feedback and reassurance, but this does not mean they are not benefiting from the relationship.

* **Have a laugh together.**

It is important that the mentee feels comfortable in your presence and therefore although they are receiving advice they also need feel comfortable to relax and enjoy the experience also.

**Elements of Quality Mentoring Programmes**

Elements of effective mentoring program operations include the following:

* Recruit mentors and mentees (other volunteers):
  + Define eligibility for mentors and mentees;
  + Conduct awareness and information sessions for potential mentors.
* Screen potential mentors and mentees:
  + Ensure selected mentor has the experience to share with the new volunteer;
  + Conduct garda vetting on volunteer and ensure completion of new mentor forms etc.;
* Hold orientations.
  + Orient and train mentors, and mentees;
  + Provide an overview and guidelines for the mentoring process;
  + Clarify roles, responsibilities and expectations, and
  + Discuss how to handle a variety of situations.
* Match mentors and mentees:
  + Use established criteria;
  + Arrange an introduction between mentors and mentees, and
  + Ensure mentors and mentees understand and agree to the mentoring process and are ensured that this is to assist with their roles not to check up on the new volunteer.
* Provide ongoing support, supervision and monitoring of mentoring relationships:
  + Offer continuing training opportunities for participants;
  + Communicate regularly with participants and offer support;
  + Help mentors and mentees define next steps for achieving mentee goals;
  + Bring mentors together to share ideas and support;
  + Establish a process to manage grievances, resolve issues and offer positive feedback;
  + Assist mentors and mentees whose relationship is not working out, and
  + Assure that appropriate documentation is done on a regular basis eg. Simple feedback sheet.

**How to Develop a Mentoring Plan**

Mentoring is used in schools, clubs, and staff development programs. There is no single mentoring plan that fits everyone. Some are formal, official programs within an organization, while others are more casual and informal relationships. It is important if you decide to have a mentoring process in your club that you have a proper plan for putting this in place.

1. **Identify the purpose of your mentoring relationship.** You may want to teach specific information or develop a particular skill. Having a clear purpose in mind will help you develop a specific mentoring plan that meets your needs and expectations.
   * Personal development mentoring focuses on growing in social or leadership skills, or in developing one's character.
   * Club mentoring also often partners new volunteers with current ones in order to help them learn specific tasks or jobs. There may also be training opportunities designed to help the volunteer progress.
2. **Determine the format of mentoring you would like to put in place.** Each person prefers a certain environment in which they can connect with their mentor. Decide what works best for you.
   * Traditional mentoring consists of a one-on-one, face-to-face relationship.
   * Group mentoring includes one mentor but several mentees.
   * Team mentoring involves several mentors with several mentees.
   * Peer mentoring consists of a more mutual relationship, where each person mentors the other.
3. **Identify potential mentors.** Mentors should be knowledgeable in the area you want to learn about. You should also have a good connection with them. For example if the new volunteer is a coach then it is important that their mentor is an experienced and knowledgeable coach.

* If you are pairing others together in mentoring relationships, it is important that you consider your matches carefully. Take interests, personalities, and skills into consideration.

1. **Brainstorm potential activities or discussions.** There are particular purposes for a mentoring relationship and it is important that the mentor and mentee decide on these prior to the process. Explore different things they may learn throughout it.
   * Make a list of specific things the new volunteer wants to learn. For example, if the purpose for mentoring is to learn more about being a secretary, identify the secretary or assistant in your club so the new volunteer can learn these specific skills and write these down. At the beginning of the mentoring process.
2. **Create a structure for your mentoring relationship.** This helps both mentors and mentees have appropriate expectations and enables them to decide if the commitment is one they can realistically manage.
   * Determine when and how often they will meet. Figure out which days and times work best for you. Then, based on your goals for this mentoring relationship, decide how often the mentee will need to meet with their mentor.
   * Decide where they will meet. Some mentors prefer to have their mentee tag along with them during normal club activities. Others may want to meet for specific occasions or events.
   * Lay down relationship guidelines. Together, decide when it is appropriate to call each other, what information will be kept confidential, if it is okay to visit one another at home, and so forth.
   * Set a tentative time frame for your mentoring relationship. Mentoring often takes place for 6 months to 1 year. At the end of that time, revisit your purpose for meeting and decide if you want to renew your commitment for another set period of time.
3. Commit to **mentoring relationship.** Trust and reliability are two factors that are essential in strengthening the mentoring relationship. Each person needs to agree to show up regularly and on time. They also need to fulfill any personal obligations they agreed to throughout the mentoring. For example, if they are to prepare an event together, each person needs to finish their section.