

**Summary:
Exploring Mentoring Program Models
for Child Welfare Workers**

By Jerry Sherk, *M.A.*

Summary: Exploring Mentoring Program Models for Child Welfare Workers

Below is a list of documents that have been developed for this project. This document, "Summary: Exploring Mentoring Program Models for Child Welfare Workers," is the first in this series and is intended to give an overall view of developing child welfare worker mentoring program.

After reading this summary, you will have a better understanding of mentoring, its benefits, the major mentoring models, as well as what it takes to develop each mentoring system. *Before deciding whether to go forward with a particular mentoring model, please read **Needs Assessment Guide for Three Mentoring Models**.*

The three headings below represent the core focus of this project. They are:

- Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentoring Program (not a document);
- Formal / Paid Mentor, Mentoring Program (not a document); and
- Informal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentoring Initiative (an actual document).

All other documents are supportive of the development of these three major types of mentoring systems. *The document you are now reading is shaded.*

Document List:

1. Summary: Exploring Mentoring Program Models for Child Welfare Workers
2. Needs Assessment Guide for Three Mentoring Models
3. **FORMAL / VOLUNTEER MENTOR, MENTORING PROGRAM**
 - Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Program Design Guide
 - Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentor Manual Template
 - Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentor Manual
 - Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Trainer's Guide for Mentors
 - Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentee Manual Template
 - Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentee Manual
4. **FORMAL / PAID MENTOR, MENTORING PROGRAM**
 - Formal / Paid, Program Design Guide
5. **INFORMAL / VOLUNTEER MENTOR, MENTORING INITIATIVE**
 - Integrating Core Competencies
 - Interactive Exercises for Program Trainers
 - References

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**Summary:
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Chapter 1: Project Overview

Chapter Subjects:

- Audience for This Document
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Audience for This Document

This introductory document, “Summary: Exploring Mentoring Program Models for Child Welfare Workers,” is intended for those who are considering the development of a mentoring program within their own agency or within the agencies they serve. Readers may include the agency director, district manager, supervisor or other key administrators, county or academy training staff, or other interested parties.

Project Focus

This project was initiated to develop mentoring programs for new child welfare workers. The goals of the project include developing operational systems, which can encompass the three main types of mentoring initiatives listed below:

- Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentoring Program
- Formal / Paid Mentor, Mentoring Program
- Informal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentoring Initiative

It is also possible that an agency would want to use more than one mentoring model, e.g., an organization develops a "Formal / Volunteer" Mentoring Program and also promotes "Informal / Volunteer" Mentoring.

Project Origin

In July 2001, the California Social Work Education Center (CalSWEC) and the Regional Training Academies (RTAs) formed the Mentor Development Team to further mentoring initiatives for child welfare training throughout the state. This team was one of nine formed at that time to address statewide training issues; funds were allocated to the team from CalSWEC's RTA Coordination Contract. The Mentor Development Team began by collecting information on mentoring models that could be utilized for the education and support of child welfare workers. After collecting and assembling information about their own programs, other programs in the state, and those around the nation, the team decided to contract with an outside consultant to organize this information in a way that it could be easily utilized by agencies and RTAs that are considering developing mentoring

programs. After some discussion, the team contracted with Jerry Sherk, a San Diego area mentoring consultant.

Background of the Consultant / Author

Jerry Sherk is the author of these documents. Mr. Sherk has been working full time in the mentoring industry for six years and continues to be a lead consultant for the state of California's youth mentoring efforts. In that capacity, Mr. Sherk has helped over 100 youth mentoring programs to develop their operational systems and to implement mentor training. Recently, Mr. Sherk worked with a number of organizations to initiate "employee-to-employee" mentoring programs. This included working with the Southern Child Welfare Training Academy to create the "Supervisors' Development Academy Mentoring Program." Mr. Sherk continues to assist the Southern Academy by conducting mentor trainings, both in San Diego and San Bernardino Counties.

Reliance on Other Experts: Acknowledgements

In addition to the resources listed in the "References" document, Mr. Sherk wishes to thank a number of people for their able assistance with this project. Some were interviewed in person, others by phone or email, and some took the time to read and comment on parts of these documents.

Barrett Johnson, of the Regional Training Academy Coordination Project at the California Social Work Education Center, and David Foster, of the Central California Training Academy, gave the author continuous feedback (by phone and e-mail) and advice throughout the duration of this project, and their input was extremely helpful.

Also, the author met with Donna Daly, Jennifer Tucker-Tatlow, and Karen Prosek from the Southern Training Academy, and they provided assistance by discussing San Diego County's Supervisor Development Training Academy Mentoring Program. The three also provided a number of documents on mentoring programs that the author was able to review. The assistance of Estella Salvidar and Rosayln Estrada from the Central California Academy was invaluable, as they both openly discussed all aspects of their mentoring program and additionally provided a copy of their training model.

In addition, Joanne Munro from Orange County Health and Human Services took a great deal of time from her schedule to describe her program and to forward the author valuable mentoring program materials. Joanne also provided a number of research documents on "social worker / child welfare worker retention" that were very useful. Peter Maspaitella from the Bay Area Academy also took considerable time from his schedule to accommodate the author. Peter's excitement was contagious as he described the mentoring program that he helped design, and also provided the author all his program materials.

Before ending, Mr. Sherk would also like to thank the former Mentor Development Team and the current Transfer of Learning Team for their hard work in getting this project off of the ground. Members of the two teams include:

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Chapter 2: Background of Mentoring / Mentoring Programs

Chapter Subjects:

- Understanding the Concept of “Mentoring”
- Definition of a Mentor
- The First Mentor
- The Advent of “Formal” Mentoring
- The Mentor's Roles / Tasks
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- Benefits of Child Welfare Worker Mentoring
- Positive and Negative Results
- Considering Your Agency's Mentoring Model

Understanding the Concept of “Mentoring”

In his 1996 book, *The Kindness of Strangers*, author Marc Freeman professed the many wonders of mentoring, and how it can be one answer to disconnection and isolation. But, in the same book he also warned about the danger that comes with the lack of a unified organizational effort when he used the phrase "fervor without infrastructure."

Mr. Freeman is correct. Although a successful mentoring program can provide extraordinary widespread benefits, to have a successful formal mentoring effort, it is necessary for both staff and decision-makers to fully comprehend the concept of “mentoring” and the rationale for creating a “formal mentoring program.”

Staff needs to be well informed so they can develop and implement the structure and operational procedures needed to run a quality mentoring program. In addition, before decision-makers offer to seek out the substantial resources and support necessary to run a successful program, they will need to understand what mentoring is, as well as the benefits that a mentoring program can bring to mentors, mentees, the organization, and the public being served.

Many people believe they know what "mentoring" is, and they may be on target. But very few understand what an actual formal "mentoring program" is, how it is designed, who runs it, what the benefits are, and how to manage a successful endeavor. The truth is that a majority of mentoring programs fail, and the reason is their lack of adequate planning in the program design phase.

This document will give you an overview of what is needed to design a successful mentoring program, beginning with a description of what a mentor is.

Definition of a Mentor

Throughout the ages, the term “mentor” has been used to describe a caring individual who forms a relationship with a less experienced person during a time in their life when they are facing challenges. The mentor, a source of guidance and support, is often thought of as a *wise and trusted friend*.

**A Mentor is a wise and trusted friend.
A Mentor is also “other-centered”—his or her focus
is on the growth and development of the Mentee.**

"Often mentoring gets confused with coaching because one of the functions of a mentor is to coach the protégé or mentee. But whereas mentoring uses many of the same techniques as coaching, mentoring involves *going above and beyond*. It is a relationship in which you do more than train the employee to do his job well. Rather, your focus is to share your experience, wisdom and political savvy...." (Stone, 1999)

While a “coach” typically concentrates on a specific task, and the benefit is largely for the organization, a successful mentor is “other-centered.” That is, a mentor makes a commitment to the mentee, and s/he understands that the focus of the match is always on the mentee's growth and development.

That's why mentoring works—the mentee knows that the relationship is about him/her, not about the success of the organization and not about bringing in dollars. To that end, mentors also appreciate that they should focus first on the “relationship,” instead of always focusing on “skill-building.” This is not to say that mentors can't concentrate on building skills; they certainly can. But good mentors strive first to make the "personal connection" before getting down to business.

Mentoring is non-directive

True mentoring is also “non-directive.” Successful mentors teach their mentees the problem-solving process, rather than merely tell them the answer to a particular problem. At times they may even allow their mentee to stumble while trying to accomplish a particular task, so that the mentee may learn a valuable lesson.

The First Mentor

The first record of mentoring, in western literature, comes from Homer's classic work, *The Odyssey*. As the adventurer is about to depart on a 10-year journey, Odysseus leaves his son Telemachus with a servant, Mentor. In the absence of the father, Mentor's role was to guide and inspire Telemachus as the youngster prepared himself for his future task as the ruler of Ithaca.

In the Middle Ages, mentoring occurred when accomplished merchants, metalworkers, and even farmers took on young people to teach them their trade. Up until the Industrial Revolution, most mentoring was "spontaneous" or "informal." In other words, mentors and mentees somehow found each other. This relationship was often called an "apprenticeship."

Due to a number of factors (e.g., specialization of vocations, mobility gained through modern transportation, the breakdown of the nuclear family), "spontaneous" mentoring has suffered a marked decline within our society.

The Advent of "Formal" Mentoring

Because of the breakdown of spontaneous mentoring, in the 1960's many organizations began developing opportunities through "formal" mentoring programs. These efforts were originally developed for women and minorities, but programs soon broadened their thinking to include all employees.

According to Murray (1991), a mentoring program "...is a structure and a series of processes designed to create effective mentoring relationships, guide the desired behavior change of those involved, and evaluate the results for the protégés, the mentors, and the organization with the primary purpose of systematically developing the skills and leadership abilities of the less-experienced members of an organization."

To this end, a formal mentoring program begins with clearly written guidelines that explain participant commitments as well as other program policies and procedures. Formal programs also have staff involved in a number of tasks, including recruiting, training, matching, monitoring, and evaluation.

In a formal program that is run correctly, staff should always be available to support participants throughout the duration of the relationship. In addition, the staff should hold participants accountable to their commitments.

Programs that develop a sound structure and implement other supportive elements are usually successful. On the other hand, initiatives that hold the philosophy of mentoring as simply "putting two people together, and then letting them go" often fail. One of the main reasons is that it's human nature for busy program participants to find any number of reasons *not* to meet with their counterpart, unless program staff is monitoring them.

Mentoring is more than “putting two people together.” Formal mentoring programs provide participants with a clear program structure, as well as initial and ongoing staff support.

Mentoring programs aren't as successful if they designed to be a stand-alone endeavor. A program should not only have a clear structure but it "...should be one component of a comprehensive system of people development. For sustained effectiveness, it must be carefully integrated with the other components of that system: training programs, performance appraisals, recruitment." (Murray, 1991)

The Mentor's Roles / Tasks

The term "mentor" can have as many connotations as the word "friend." There is no one way to be a mentor, nor one clear-cut role or task that defines mentorship. Staff should describe the variety of roles that a mentor may have, explaining that the role taken on depends on the mentor's individual style, combined the needs of the mentee—needs which are constantly evolving during the relationship.

The child welfare worker mentor's roles and tasks may include:

- Becoming a source of general encouragement and support;
- Advocating for the new social worker's training needs;
- Training and reinforcement of the core competencies;
- Coaching specific skills and behaviors that are needed to function successfully as a child welfare worker;
- Evaluating and giving feedback regarding the mentee's observed performances;
- Being a positive role model;
- Serving as a confidant who will help the mentee solve problems and conflicts; and
- Guiding and inspiring the mentee through the early stages of his or her new endeavor.

The Role of the Mentee's Supervisor

It is important that the mentee's supervisor be included in the program. Participation by the supervisor is discussed at length later in this document, as well as other documents within this package. As a preview, the role of the supervisor within the mentoring relationship may include:

- Supporting the match by learning about and endorsing the agency's mentoring program and activities;
- Nominating new workers for the program;
- Meeting with the mentee and mentor early on to negotiate contact and confidentiality agreements, and to identify the mentee's training needs;
- Receiving brief progress reports and assessing the mentee's ongoing training needs;
- Upholding confidentiality by not using the mentoring relationship as a way of "policing" the mentee; and
- Attending periodic kick-offs and graduations.

It bears repeating that it is critical that the mentee's supervisor is sensitive to the confidentiality of the mentee / mentor relationship. The supervisor should not use this opportunity to draw out negative information about the new worker from the mentor. Mentees must trust in their mentors, or the mentoring process will not work.

Social Worker / Child Welfare Worker Mentoring Programs

Although informal efforts are very common, formal mentoring programs for new child welfare workers are still relatively rare. In fact, one can say that structured child welfare mentoring programs are still in the "pioneer stage." There are very few structured mentoring programs that match experienced social workers with new child welfare workers (although in the report entitled "Informal / Volunteer Mentoring Initiatives," you will see that *informal* mentoring has always been a part of the social worker culture.)

Collins (1994) reconfirms this belief by saying, "Studies from the fields of business, education, organizational, and developmental psychology have dominated the scholarly and professional literature and media on mentorship. In contrast, little is known about mentor and protégé relationships among social workers."

In California to date, although several "*supervisor* mentoring programs" have been located, only two formalized child welfare worker mentoring programs have been identified.

Orange County Social Service Agency Children and Family Services Mentoring Program is a "formal / volunteer" effort. This program has been running for several years, and it currently has approximately 100 mentees. Roughly half those matches serve new child welfare workers; most of the other matches are for social workers who want to become supervisors. The Program Coordinator indicates that within the agency, the mentoring program is considered to be very successful. Perhaps the best endorsement is that many former protégés have later decided to become mentors. (Conversations with Program Coordinator, Joanne Munro, June/July 2002).

The Central California Child Welfare Training Academy has developed a program called the Merced Peer Mentoring Program. This undertaking is a "formal / paid" mentoring effort, where one mentor works with seven new child welfare workers. The program

combined classroom study on core competencies at the Central Academy, with interaction with the mentor. The mentor/ mentee interchange included having the mentor accompany the mentee on home visits. Although the program has not been running for a long time, and only a few child welfare workers mentees have had the benefit of participation, the initial results are encouraging. Mentees felt that they were supported by the mentor, the mentoring program was a positive experience, and the program prepared them to better take on their duties as child welfare workers (Hardina & Shaw, 2001).

Although few formal programs for social workers and for new child welfare workers exist, the need for such programs is obvious. The lack of staffing at some agencies is presenting a continual crisis. Job burnout is widespread and agencies are seeking out innovative ways to recruit, train, support, and retain quality child welfare workers. The development of formal mentoring programs can be one strategy to help avert the crisis in recruitment, training, and retention.

Ellet (1999) champions mentoring as a way of diminishing social worker / child welfare worker turnover. "Mentoring includes on the job skills training, guidance and support when attempting assignments which are new to the employee, availability to answer questions, inclusion in the established office activities both formal and informal, use of role conflict for growth and understanding in the job... and in general making a genuine effort to let each new employee know that he/she is valued, and cared about." (p. 28)

Benefits of Child Welfare Worker Mentoring

"Employee-to-employee" mentoring has been validated by a number of studies. For example, Alleman (1982) and Zey (1984) in the American Society for Training and Development (1986) found that:

- Performance and productivity ratings are higher for mentees than for non-mentees.
- Mentees are paid more, take more pleasure in their work, and have greater career satisfaction than non-mentees.
- Mentees have more knowledge of the technical and organizational aspects of the business than non-mentees.

Other mentoring literature points out the following benefits that often result from the mentoring process: skill acquisition, leadership development, job satisfaction, and worker retention (Dreher, & Ash, 1990; Fuller, Morrison, Jones, Bridger, & Brown, 1999; Kaminski, Kaufman, Graubarth, & Robbins, 2000).

As there have been so few actual child welfare worker mentoring programs, outcome studies for this type of mentoring are extremely scarce. The list of potential benefits provided below is a compilation made by this author as he discussed the subject with a variety of social worker mentoring program coordinators (conversations with, Daly, Saldivar, Maspaitella, Munro, Prosec, Tucker-Tattlow, May-June, 2002), as well as from

"Executive Mentoring Program, Participant Training Manual, National Epilepsy Foundation," (Sherk, et.al., 2002).

Benefits of establishing a child welfare worker mentoring program will be provided for mentee, for the mentor and for the organization. They include:

Mentee Benefits

- Providing the new child welfare worker with a sense of care and support, while reducing the feelings of isolation;
- Orienting the mentee into the workplace;
- Teaching and reinforcing the core competencies;
- Facilitating awareness of the organizational culture;
- Facilitating an understanding of the main philosophies of social work;
- Strengthening organizational skills;
- Advancing the ability to quickly respond to a variety of problems;
- Improving self-confidence;
- Facilitating an awareness of community and agency resources; and
- Enjoying the rewards inherent in a caring relationship.

Mentor Benefits

- Understanding that participation will enhance the quality of care provided to the individuals and families;
- Providing an alternative career track for experienced workers wanting to become 'master practitioners' rather than supervisors or managers;
- Improving leadership skills;
- Increasing self-confidence gained through leadership;
- Enhancing communication and relationship skills;
- Improving problem-solving skills;
- Receiving compensation and / or incentives (if any are given);
- Enjoying the rewards inherent in a caring relationship; and
- Experiencing the personal gratification that is obtained through the act of giving.

Organizational Benefits

- The mentoring program can be used as tool for recruiting and retaining child welfare workers;
- Improving the quality of care provided to individuals and families, and therefore improving outcomes;
- Retaining quality employees by providing an alternative career track for experienced workers who wish to become 'master practitioners' rather than supervisors or managers;
- Communicating organizational values;
- Increasing organizational loyalty;
- Improving agency communication;
- Formulating, promulgating and reinforcing new ideas and "promising practices" through the mentoring process;

- Creating another venue for the development of leadership; and
- Improving the overall productivity for employees

Of course, one of the primary benefits of mentoring a new child welfare worker is that he or she will be much better prepared to serve the public. Therefore, the individuals and the families being served will become the main recipients of the benefits of a quality child welfare worker mentoring effort.

Positive and Negative Results

Although the concept of employee-to-employee mentoring is becoming more accepted year by year, implementation of these programs has had mixed results. One mentoring program may be a shining success, but another can be a stunning failure. Let's not forget the earlier mentioned warning, "fervor without infrastructure." (Freeman, 1996)

The key to having a successful program is to understand that quality programs need substantial resources, careful planning in the design phase, and follow-through during program implementation in order for them to flourish.

Quality mentoring programs need resources, thoughtful design, and follow through during implementation. Mentoring programs that take short cuts will find that their initiatives will fail.

Considering Your Agency's Mentoring Model

As you read through this "Summary" as well as other documents, you will probably be doing so 1) to evaluate whether your agency should attempt to develop a program, and 2) to determine which "model" or "system" of mentoring your organization might implement.

Please note that it is possible to select a combination of mentoring models. For instance, you could have a program where some of the mentors are paid and others are volunteers. Your agency could also have one effort that is formal, while still encouraging informal mentoring.

The agency could also choose to do as Orange County Social Services Agency has done, which is to develop a program that mentors not only child welfare workers, but any employee who is considering the learning of new skills and/or is considering promotion.

The potential combinations of mentoring models are endless, so we will leave the development of hybrid systems to your imagination and creativity.

Chapter 3: Considering Informal / Volunteer Mentoring

Chapter Subjects

- Description of Informal / Volunteer Mentoring
- Potential Benefits of this Model
- A Caution for this Model

Description of Informal / Volunteer Mentoring

Informal / Volunteer mentoring is where the mentor volunteers to connect with a new worker, and it is generally done without the help of staff or an organized program structure. This kind of mentoring, popular among child welfare workers for many years, has been very successful.

Informal / Volunteer mentors embody the true spirit of mentoring. That is, they support others with the knowledge that they will be helping these individuals to serve the greater good. Many mentors undertake this task because they can remember what it was like for them during their first few months on the job. They understand that a new child welfare worker can greatly benefit from an orientation to the workplace, and from assistance with the many fundamentals of social work. Volunteer mentors also know that dealing with child abuse and other types of intense situations can have a tremendous emotional impact on the worker, and that support by a mentor during these first encounters can be invaluable.

The duration of informal mentoring relationships varies. A typical period for a match seems to be around three to four months, but a match can be shorter or longer.

Agencies aware of the benefits of informal mentoring may support informal efforts because they want to create a "culture of mentoring" within their organizations. Agency support may include endorsement by key administrators, allotting employee work time for the mentoring sessions, and developing workshops to educate potential mentor and mentees on this type of mentoring.

The document entitled "Informal / Volunteer Mentoring Initiative" discusses strategies for creating more order in these informal relationships. A key point is that the more information and training the agency can provide to participants, the better chance that these relationships will succeed.

One approach is to develop periodic workshops for potential mentors and mentees on how to initiate and conduct informal mentoring relationships. Classes may range anywhere from two to four hours in length. Topics can include such items as:

- How to Recruit Your Counterpart (Mentor or Mentee);
- Developing Relationship Guidelines; and
- The Focus of Activities for the Match

Again, the more structure you can add to an informal mentoring effort, the better. Elements that provide structure include endorsement from key administrators, written guidelines, mentor/mentee participation agreements, and incentives for mentors, etc.

Potential Benefits of this Model

In addition to the regular benefits of a mentoring effort, there can be other plusses in promoting an Informal / Volunteer mentoring initiative. This effort:

- Helps to raise the awareness for possible future formal mentoring program
- Brings together individuals who are interested in developing mentoring programs
- Assists in developing a “culture of mentoring” within the organization
- Inspires individuals to cultivate a helping attitude when interacting with fellow employees
- Has a history among social workers as a successful way to support new child welfare workers.

A Caution for this Model

Even though informal mentoring has been a staple of social work and provides tremendous benefits for new workers, this type of effort will not normally have as much of a long-term positive effect as a formal mentoring program. The reason is that in a structured program, participants are recruited, trained, matched, monitored, and evaluated by program staff. An organized effort raises the quality of the mentoring being provided and also encourages participants to be more accountable. Research shows that when mentors and mentees are monitored, they meet much more consistently than those matches that are not monitored (Public Private Ventures,1995).

A common pitfall in informal mentoring is that participants may start out with all the best of intentions, but the everyday work demands are likely to distract them from their commitments.

Again, if an agency develops an informal / volunteer mentoring initiative, it would be well served to try to add as much structure to the relationship as possible.

The following section (Chapter 4) looks at two models of formal mentoring. These two systems take a great deal of effort to design and implement, but there is a payoff: they can make a tremendous difference in the confidence and skill levels of new workers. These positive changes will not only reverberate throughout the agency, but they will result in better services for the public.

Chapter 4: Eight Key Elements of Effective Practice for Formal Mentoring Programs

Chapter Subjects:

- Brief Description of Two Formal Mentoring Models

Eight Key Elements of Effective Practice for Formal Mentoring Programs

- Obtain the Endorsement / Support of the Agency Director and Key Staff
- Secure Program Funding
- Hire a Capable Program Coordinator
- Design a Sound Program Structure
- Assure Voluntary Participation
- Provide Incentives for Mentors
- Ensure Participation From the Mentee's Direct Supervisor
- Focus on the core competencies

Brief Description of Two Formal Mentoring Models

In this section, a description of the two types of models for formal mentoring systems is provided. They are as follows:

“Formal / volunteer” mentoring programs. A “formal / volunteer” mentoring program is designed and implemented by the organization. This program matches experienced social workers with new child welfare workers on a one-to-one basis. The goal of the match is to support the new worker as they build the understanding and the skills necessary to be successful at their new endeavor.

The agency usually hires a person called the “program coordinator” to oversee all aspects of the program. This includes planning, recruiting, training, matching, monitoring, and evaluating. The program coordinator may also be involved in the program design process. (See “*Program Design Guide, Formal / Volunteer Program.*”)

A typical match lasts for six months, meeting one to two times a month for one to two hours at a time (length of the match, number of times, and how often it meets vary from program to program). Other brief contacts are made via e-mail and phone.

The match usually focuses on an orientation to the workplace and the mentee's ability to grasp the core competencies. Logs are periodically forwarded to the program coordinator so that s/he can follow the progress of the match. The program coordinator also “troubleshoots” any problems that may come up in the relationship.

“Formal / paid” mentoring programs. This model is also developed and implemented by the organization. To be the mentors, the program hires experienced social workers, who may even be included on the program's design process. (See “*Program Design Guide, Formal / Paid Program.*”)

The head or “Lead Mentor” runs the program in a similar way that the "program coordinator" runs a volunteer effort. In addition to overseeing the program, the Lead Mentor will typically have some direct mentoring duties. This is because heading up a “paid” mentoring program is not as time intensive as a volunteer effort; the paid mentors help to keep the program organized.

After the mentors are trained, they are matched with several mentees. A full-time mentor might be assigned to seven or so new child welfare workers and a half-time mentor could be assigned to three or four mentees. Paid mentors spend a considerable amount of their time with each mentee (e.g., four hours a week), and they often accompany their mentees on home visits.

Eight Key Elements for Effective Practices for Formal Mentoring Programs

Below begins a discussion of eight key elements for designing and implementing

- “formal / volunteer”
- “formal / paid” mentoring programs. As they are so similar in design, they will be discussed together.

To differentiate, notes on “formal / paid” programs will be shaded.

Key Element 1

Obtain the Endorsement / Support of the Agency Director and Key Staff

For the individual(s) trying to get the program going, it is crucial to gain endorsement and support from the agency director and other key staff persons. This is especially true if the vision is to develop a relatively large mentoring program (say 15-25 matches). There are two main reasons to gain the endorsement of decision-makers.

The first is so that decision-makers can help to provide or to seek out program funding. Funding is needed for such items as: the hiring of program staff, refreshments, incentives for mentors, outside trainers, etc.

The second reason is that endorsement can lead to the support of the program by the agency's employees. When key administrators "talk up" a mentoring program, it is a tremendous help to staff in recruiting volunteer mentors, involving the mentees' direct supervisors, and in obtaining buy-in and participation from the agency's training staff.

It will often be more difficult for smaller programs to get the endorsement from key administrators. For example, it won't be as likely that the agency director of a huge organization would meet with staff to discuss having the mentoring program work with two or three new child welfare workers.

These smaller efforts might have a better chance of trying to take a "grass roots approach." For example, one strategy would be to first recruit several mentees and mentors, then secondly, to contact the mentees' respective direct supervisors to ask for permission for them to participate. (Of course, staff would have to weigh the political climate before moving forward with the grass roots approach, or they could get in hot water.)

"Formal / Paid" programs also need support and endorsement from key administrators. In fact, paid programs will likely need even more attention in the area of "program funding" because of budget implications. This model requires more funding because all the mentors will be paid, as opposed to volunteer programs, where only staff is compensated.

The fact that mentors are being compensated also sends a message that the administration endorses this program and that mentoring is one of the organization's key objectives.

In addition, one of the main hurdles for a mentoring program, the "recruitment of mentors," is negated, as mentors won't have to be convinced to participate—they will be paid.

Key Element 2 **Secure Program Funding**

The agency director or other key personnel need to be active in trying to secure the necessary amount of funding to properly run the mentoring effort. Please don't try to start a mentoring program (especially a relatively large one) without money, as the program will be bound to fail.

The main expense of a volunteer mentoring program is for the program coordinator's salary. Some large mentoring efforts might require additional staff. If the mentors are given work time to meet with their mentees, then this would also be a budget item for the agency. Secondary expenses could include incentives for mentors, hiring one or more outside experts or trainers to work with the program, copying fees for program materials, refreshments, etc.

Please note that funding is more fully discussed in "Needs Assessment Guide for Three Mentoring Models."

Paid mentoring programs have higher costs, as it's likely that each mentor will be a salaried social worker. An alternative (and probably less expensive) method is to hire recently retired social workers as mentors.

Key Element 3
Hire a Capable Program Coordinator

For a mentoring program that aims to make 20 to 30 matches, hiring a full-time program coordinator would be best. Depending on the amount of oversight the program is planning, some larger efforts may require additional staffing. The coordinator should be an experienced social worker, who 1) has good administrative skills, 2) has a strong understanding of human dynamics, and 3) is well liked by co-workers.

The program coordinator should be involved in all aspects of the program, including planning, recruiting, training, matching, monitoring, supervising, and evaluating matches. In addition, it's beneficial (but not absolutely necessary) for the program coordinator to also mentor one or more mentees. This way, the coordinator can experience the program first-hand, and he or she will get a better understanding of the mentoring relationship.

It's also best if the program coordinator participates in the initial design phase of the program. The "Design Guide" explains the benefits of having the program coordinator on board early on in the design process.

Volunteer programs that are initiating a smaller "pilot mentoring program," with, say 5 to 12 matches, should consider hiring at least a part-time program coordinator. This person can later be given a full-time position as the program grows.

Paid mentoring programs should consider hiring a person with the job title of "Lead Mentor." This individual's job description is much like that of a "program coordinator" in a volunteer program, but their duties are fewer; it's less time intensive because the other paid mentors will be focusing on program tasks as part of their jobs (e.g., recruiting, monitoring, and evaluating mentees). In addition, the Lead Mentor won't have the ordinarily time-consuming task of recruiting volunteer mentors. Lead Mentors typically also provide mentoring services, but their loads should be lightened so that they can complete the administrative tasks necessary to keep the program going.

Key Element 4
Design a Sound Program Structure

Designing a solid program structure with clear rules is another essential element in running a quality mentoring program. *A detailed process for developing the program structure is demonstrated in the documents entitled “Formal / Volunteer Program Design Guide,” and “Formal / Paid, Program Design Guide.”*

During the design process, the program coordinator works with an industry expert (or an experienced program coordinator), and together they develop timelines for specific tasks. They may also recruit a temporary “design team,” a small group of individuals who will provide input on various aspects of the design. The design team is also useful in obtaining endorsement of and participation in the mentoring program from their respective departments (or regions). The design team can also work on the creation of supplemental materials, such as mentee training manuals, power point presentations, brochures, etc. If everyone agrees, the design team can later transform into the “Mentoring Program Advisory Committee.” This committee will meet every few months to review policies, solve problems, and support the program coordinator, as necessary.

Paid mentoring programs may choose to develop the design team from the ranks of the paid mentors. If the aim is for inclusion of more departments / job descriptions / regions than the mentors currently represent, additional design team members can be recruited from those designated areas. The paid mentor design team can also serve as a “Mentoring Program Advisory Committee” throughout the duration of the mentoring program.

Key Element 5
Assure Voluntary Participation

It’s usually not hard to recruit new child welfare workers to become mentees. If they aren't sold on the program during their classroom work, it's very likely that they will quickly understand the importance of mentoring by the first or second week as they enter the workplace.

On the other hand, it can be extremely difficult to recruit voluntary mentors for a formal program, mainly because social workers' schedules are so strained. If a program is unable to recruit and retain voluntary mentors, then the effort will fail.

Another key for implementing a successful program is to have the mentors actually be “volunteers,” rather than forcing them to participate through subtle or not-so-subtle pressure. Mentors who are coerced into participation are usually unhappy mentors. In addition, many experts believe that mandated mentoring is not really mentoring, because

a central aspect of this service is for the mentors to have the proper attitude. This includes focusing on the mentee's needs, and making a commitment to develop the relationship. Nobody wants to put time and effort into this type of activity if they are being coerced into participating.

An essential factor in getting mentors to volunteer is in providing them with valuable incentives. This is discussed within the subsequent "key element" below, as well as in "Needs Assessment Guide for Three Mentoring Models."

Paid programs shouldn't have to concern themselves with obtaining volunteers, as mentors in this type of program will receive compensation. Many social workers who are asked to become paid mentors see this as an opportunity to help others by sharing their experiences, and they may also see this as a welcome respite from their everyday duties. They may also view themselves as someone on track to become a "master practitioner," by way of serving in the mentoring program. This may be especially valuable to individuals who don't want to become supervisors.

Key Element 6
Provide Incentives for Mentors

"Lack of rewards for the mentor is one of the most commonly mentioned obstacles to structuring the mentoring process." (Murray, 1991, p.59)

In a voluntary program, mentors should be invited and enticed to participate (instead of pressured), and therefore it's very helpful to provide them with a number of incentives. Some of these incentives may include:

- Financial rewards;
- General recognition, awards, certificates;
- Recognition in newsletters;
- Commendations by the County Board of Supervisors;
- Letters of commendation by Agency Director, etc.;
- Lightened workloads;
- Positive reports in personnel files;
- Scheduled back up for mentor program training time;
- Civil service points (if applicable;)
- First choice of trainings; and
- Permission to conduct mentoring sessions during work time.

(The above incentives were collected from a variety of program materials, as well as phone conversations with four California Social Worker Mentoring Programs, April-July 2002.)

Incentives are very important for the recruitment and retention of volunteer mentors. Mentors give from their hearts, but that doesn't stop them from wanting to be appreciated by the organization for their service.

The longer a mentor serves, the more the organization should try to provide them with a variety of incentives. Some program coordinators remarked that the best mentors keep coming back, but after two or three mentoring cycles they tend to burn out. Burnout can be lessened if the mentors are made to feel special.

“Time off” as an incentive has had mixed reviews, as social workers have remarked that they usually come back to the same amount of work that they had when they left, but less time to complete it (conversation with Donna Daly, Southern Training Academy, May 2002).

Whatever the incentives, they should be carefully considered, and the financial implications should be budgeted in along with other program expenses. Also, please don't make the mistake of promising an incentive (no matter how vaguely), if it isn't set in stone that mentors will actually receive it. If staff or agency administration can't follow through on a particular incentive, then it could cause bad feelings. Mentors who are giving up their valuable time certainly don't want to end up in the program feeling like they've been taken advantage of.

Paid mentors need few incentives, as their salary is their compensation. Still, it helps morale if the program furnishes refreshments for mentor gatherings, and it tries to make all participants feel special and cared for. Small expenditures of time and money on recognition ceremonies and small incentives help to build the team feeling.

Key Element 7
**Ensure Participation from the
Mentee's Direct Supervisor**

The paper "Why do MSW's Stay in Public Child Welfare?" Organizational and Training Implications of a Retention Study" describes the perspective of the social worker for whom one of the variables that reduces the level of emotional exhaustion is "The extent to which one's supervisor aids a worker in job-related tasks (Dickinson and Perry, 1998, p.6)."

Hardina & Shaw (2001), while reporting on the Merced Peer Mentoring Program (for child welfare workers), pointed out that one of the weak points of the program was the lack of communication between the match and the mentee's supervisor: "...there was a breakdown when the supervisors did not know what their trainees were working on with the mentor (p.28)."

Early on, the mentor, mentee, and supervisor should meet to discuss training needs. They should also come to an agreement regarding issues of confidentiality within the match. During this negotiation, everyone should keep in mind that the mentor's job is not to "police and report," but rather to support the mentee.

If the mentor continually criticizes and points out the mentee's weaknesses to the supervisor, then there will be a lack of trust in the relationship. Where there is a lack of trust, the mentoring relationship is bound to fail. More information on this subject can be found in a number of documents within this package under the heading of "negotiating confidentiality agreements."

One of the best ways to assure the full participation of the mentee's supervisor is to have the request come down from superiors. Perhaps the second best method is the grass roots approach, which was described in the "Obtaining Endorsement..." part of this section

Paid programs should experience only minor differences in this area. One possibility is that the paid mentor might have more time to pursue the participation of the mentee's supervisor. In addition, a paid program can spend more time discussing with mentors the correct way to approach and work with the mentee's supervisor.

Key Element 8
Focus on the Core Competencies

The CalSWEC core competencies for social workers "...were developed by a culturally and racially diverse committee representing faculty, public social services and the nonprofit sector. One hundred twenty-six competencies were evaluated and then 26 items in which convergence was found were grouped into 6 sections. The competencies are organized into six major sections: 1. Ethnic sensitive practice, 2. Core Child Welfare Skills, 3. Social Work Skills and Methods, 4. Human Development and Behavior, 5. Workplace Management, and 6. Child Welfare Management." (Okamura & Jones, undated paper, p.7).

Formal mentoring with a focus on helping new workers learn the core competencies is still a relatively new endeavor, but Hardina & Shaw (2001) reported on the Merced County Peer Mentoring program, where one experienced peer mentor worked with seven new child welfare workers for a period of six months. "The intervention consisted of the combination of the peer mentoring program and attendance at each one of the Academy's six training modules. The modules provide training in the 67 'core' child welfare competencies (Hardina & Shaw, 2001, p-9)."

During the Merced program, the mentor not only assisted each mentee by discussing the core competencies, but she accompanied each mentee out on casework. There were

positive results demonstrated by using pre and posts tests, but according to the authors, the most impressive results were anecdotal. Having the mentor accompany mentees into the field "...allowed new workers to apply what they learned to real life situations [and this] allowed new workers to overcome anxieties and helped their transition from new worker to seasoned worker (Hardina & Shaw, 2001, p-23). In focus groups, some of the mentees commented that "...the peer mentor helps them to relax." In addition, "They stated that she allowed them to make mistakes and that they are allowed them to learn from their mistakes."

It's obvious that pairing a mentee and mentor to combine classroom or textbook learning with casework can be very impactful. By using these combined learning strategies, the mentee can experience the unexpected difficulties that the classroom can't provide, as well as the emotional impact of dealing with real life cases. The mentor can allow the mentee to make some mistakes, and at the same time, the mentor will be providing the all-important safety net, should major problems occur.

Matching a new child welfare worker with an experienced mentor during classroom work is best, but if s/he can't be paired at that time then they should be matched as soon as possible.

Typical components of working with the core competencies are:

- Classroom Work: The mentee focuses on the core competencies during classroom work. If the mentee has a mentor during this time, the mentor can discuss classroom work.
- Mentee Assessment: After classroom work, or while entering the field, the mentee assesses his or her training needs with the use of an instrument, such as the Individual Training Needs Assessment (ITNA). The mentor may assist in this evaluation. In some cases, the mentee's supervisor will assist with the assessment.
- Supervisor's Perception of Training Needs: After identifying areas for training needs, the mentee and mentor will discuss these needs with the mentee's supervisor (if the mentee hasn't done so already) in order to gain his or her input. All three parties will agree on the activities that will help the mentee to build knowledge and skills in the identified areas.
- Development of the Mentee Activity Plan: After the initial assessment, and after mentee, mentor and supervisor have thoroughly discussed the mentee's training needs, a Mentee Activity Plan (MAP) used to log the 1) mentee's learning objectives, 2) the mentor's strategy / activity used to support each objective, 3) the results of the effort, and 4) notes on any future tasks / strategies that would help with this specific learning objective. *(See addendum for a blank sample of the MAP.)*
- Ongoing Contact with Supervisor: Mentee, mentor, and the mentee's supervisor will also come to an agreement regarding the number and length of contacts the three will

have during the mentoring cycle, as well as the format for those contacts (face-to-face, phone conference, e-mail). It is suggested that these three also come to an agreement regarding "confidentiality" and "progress reports." (See the "Volunteer" or "Paid" "Program Design Guides" for discussions on these items.) The rule of thumb regarding confidentiality is that the relationship won't be used to "police" the mentee.

- Home Visits / Court Appointments: If possible, mentee and mentor will accompany each other on home visits and on court appointments so that the mentee can experience what was previously text book information in a real life situation (while at the same time being assisted and supported by the mentor). During this fieldwork, the mentee might be shadowing the mentor, or the mentor could observe as the mentee performs his or her duties.
- Additional Mentor / Mentee Learning Strategies: The mentor and mentee can use their creativity when it comes to developing learning strategies. For example, 1) the mentee may go on home visits or court appointments by him or herself, and then report back to the mentor so that they can discuss the mentee's experience, 2) the mentor and mentee can discuss case files, 3) the mentor can initiate and engage the mentee in role plays, or 4) the mentor can present vignettes and ask the mentee how approach each situation.
- Evaluation: The mentee should be evaluated on the skills and knowledge learned after interacting with their mentor while completing work in the various areas of the core competencies. The evaluation could consist of taking the ITNA once again, or it could be accomplished by another type of self-evaluation. The assessment could also be conducted through one-to-one interviews or by roundtable discussions. In addition, the mentor and the mentee's supervisor could also provide a written evaluation of the mentee's progress.

Each mentoring program should chronicle the various training methods used and the positive and negative outcomes from using specific strategies. Improvements in the program can then be made before the next mentoring cycle.

Please review the document entitled "Integrating Core Competencies" to learn more on this subject.

There are also references about utilizing the core competencies in the following three documents:

- Formal / Volunteer Program Design Guide
- Formal / Paid Program Design Guide
- Mentor Program Manual Template

In addition, a full listing of the core competencies can be found at CalSWEC's Website: <http://calswec.berkeley.edu>.

Paid mentoring programs should also consider focusing on the core competencies. One of the major differences between paid and volunteer programs is that mentors and mentees in a paid program will most likely be able to spend more time working together on the core competencies.

Chapter 5: Review of Key Elements, and Document List and Description

Chapter Subjects:

- Review of Eight Key Elements of Effective Practice for Formal Mentoring Programs
- Document List and Description

Please quickly review the list below to consider if your agency might be able to provide the elements necessary to develop a formal mentoring program.

- Obtain the Endorsement / Support of the Agency Director and Key Staff
- Secure Program Funding
- Hire a Capable Program Coordinator
- Design a Sound Program Structure
- Assure Voluntary Participation
- Provide Incentives for Mentors
- Ensure Participation from the Mentee's Direct Supervisor
- Focus on the Core Competencies

All the key elements listed above will be described throughout the many documents within this package. You may want to proceed by looking at the "Needs Assessment Guide for Three Mentoring Models," then make a preliminary decision about one of the models that you might like to explore.

Document List and Description

Summary Report: Exploring Mentoring Program Models for Child Welfare Workers

The "Summary Report" is the document that you are now reading. Its purpose is to give an overall view of the three major mentoring models, the benefits involved, and to describe the keys to developing an effective mentoring program.

Needs Assessment Guide for Three Mentoring Models

This instrument reviews the various needs and resources required for implementing each of the three major mentoring models. Included in the assessment are items such as support, endorsement, financial costs and staffing.

Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentoring Program

This is not a document, but the heading for the component documents (see bullet points directly beneath) that describe how to develop a Formal / Volunteer Mentoring Program. "Formal" means the program is run by an organization and that it has clear goals and guidelines. "Volunteer" indicates the mentor is not being compensated for his or her services.

- **Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Program Design Guide**
The "Design Guide" describes the process involved for the Program Manager and the Design Team in developing the mentoring system. Part Two of this document provides a detailed list of programmatic elements for the design team to consider during the design process. As the team makes decisions, the Program Manager will integrate these guidelines into the "Formal / Volunteer Mentor Manual Template."
- **Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentor Manual Template**
This template should be used in tandem with the "Formal / Volunteer Program Design Guide" (described in the above bullet point). When you are finished using these two instruments you will have completed development of the Mentor Training Manual.
- **Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentor Manual**
This is a sample finished mentor manual.
- **Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Trainer's Guide for Mentors**
This document is an annotated version of the mentor manual that program staff can utilize during mentor training. (When the manual is completed, it will be posted at the CalSWEC site: <http://calswec.berkeley.edu>.)
- **Formal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentee Manual Template**
Much like the "mentor" template, this "mentee" template will help you to develop your Mentee Manual.

Formal / Paid Mentor, Mentoring Program

This is also *not* a document, but a heading. The component documents discuss this, the second of the major mentoring models. "Formal" means that that the program is run by an organization and that it has clear goals and guidelines. "Paid" indicates that the mentors are compensated. The document listed below supports the development of this mentoring model.

- **Formal / Paid Program Design Guide**
The "Design Guide" describes the process involved for the design team to develop the program. Part Two of this document provides a list of programmatic elements for the design team to consider during the design process. Please note that the mentor manual template, the mentor manual, and the trainer's guide for "formal / volunteer" programs can be used with this "paid" design guide also. The only difference is that some small changes will have to be made while describing the details of the program's structure.

Developing an Informal / Volunteer Mentor, Mentoring Initiative

This document discusses the third of the primary models of mentoring programs. "Informal" means that it is not run by the agency, and "volunteer" indicates that the mentors are not compensated. Included in this manuscript are 1) agency strategies for developing this model, 2) a mentor training, and 3) a mentee training.

Integrating the Core Competencies

This section describes how to utilize the core competencies as a focus for the mentoring relationships to include use of the Individualized Training Needs Assessment and the Mentee Activity Plan.

Interactive Exercises for Program Trainers

Exercises have been developed for both mentors and mentees, and these may be utilized by program staff / trainers during initial and ongoing participant trainings.

References

"References" lists the resources used in the development of these materials.

**Please check in periodically with the CalSWEC Web site for
changes and additions to these materials:
<http://calswec.berkeley.edu>.**