

General Guidelines When Working with a Mentee

First off, thank you for taking time to empower the youth in our community and partner to help the mentees in creating a strong path to a successful future. We strongly advise that you review these guidelines to help create the best environment for both you and your mentee(s). Any time an uncomfortable situation or concerning conversation occurs please notify us immediately so that we can get each mentee the additional support they may need. Please remember that it is important to protect the privacy of the mentee(s) but you will have point of contacts to help when any concerns arise. These guidelines are created to not only keep the student safe but also keep you safe.

Quick points to remember

- Listen
- Ask questions to help develop your and the mentee's understanding of a situation or problem
- Offer different perspectives
- Provide an insight into your work and career
- Be a sounding board
- Help mentees identify areas for development
- Provide advice on career development
- Provide information and knowledge and share informal networks
- Provide support and encouragement
- Offer guidance and advice in regards to qualifications
- Be a critical friend
- Encourage self reflection

HELP YOUR MENTEE UNDERSTAND AND DEFINE THEIR GOALS

Your mentee may be excited about starting this new opportunity or on the other hand may be quite nervous about meeting someone new and sharing information about themselves. Either way, as a mentor you will help the mentee by having sharing about your career and helping them work on defining their goals. This is their first time and them participating is already a wonderful achievement.

When working on mentee goals it is important to have objectives be measurable and manageable in order to meet them within a specific time frame that you have agreed upon together, typically 3 months. Follow the "SMART" guideline when coming up with objectives: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound—and clear. Remember not to overload each other with the goals and a good rule to follow to help prevent burnout is to focus on one goal and create achievable objects for the goal over the course of three months.

- Discuss expectations for the mentoring relationship in your first meeting with the mentee. Listen for what the mentee expects; be clear on what you expect. Come to an agreement about how your relationship will work.
- Prepare a topic for discussion for each meeting. Make sure you are discussing expectations for teaching, research and service.
- Bring your Mentee/Mentor booklet with you where you work to evaluate how progress is coming along. Be mindful on notes you take as you and the mentee will work out of this book together when discussing goals and objectives.

ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BIG PICTURE

Before you dive into problem solving any particular objective, spend some time getting up to speed on historical context to help inform the advice you may give: Who are the major players in your mentee's life? What are they grappling with most right now? How did they get here? What's their relationship like with their manager/peers/direct reports? How do they think you can help? This contextual information can help you better understand their goals, the type of help they've received in the past, their past efforts, and how you're best suited to help them make progress.

- Listen to the mentee: what is he or she proud of? What is s/he spending time on? Is this the right place to spend time? Does s/he need to re-prioritize? Where do you hear hesitation or silence—what is the mentee not sharing?
- Listen for personal problems (even if you do not plan to become a 'counselor'): Is there anything in the mentee's personal life that may need attention or which might be a reason for a break in the mentorship? (personal illness, ill parents or partner, new parenthood, single parenthood etc.)
- Do Not - Assume the mentee is doing well because you are not hearing from him/her and because s/he is so talented already. Silence can be the sign of a serious problem.

BE CONSISTENT IN OFFERING YOUR TIME

Once you have an intro conversation under your belt, it's time to dig in. As you move toward regular meetings, it can be tempting to de-prioritize them, but it's crucial that you don't. Mentorship time should be sacrosanct: When you move a meeting, you signal to your mentee that they're not worth it. Consistency is the key to establishing and deepening trust. It allows you to quickly go deep toward potential solutions, rather than revisiting old conversations because you haven't seen each other in a while. If you know you can't commit to meeting regularly, now isn't the right time for you to be a mentor.

KEEP AN OPEN MIND TO PROBLEM SOLVING

You may be more experienced than your mentee, but stay open to the possibility that your advice might not always be right for them, and let them know you're open to their feedback. Phrases like, "Tell me if I'm getting off track," "Interrupt me if I'm operating on old information," and, "Don't hesitate to let me know if this isn't resonating" show that you're here for your mentee and don't mind switching gears if what you're saying isn't productive. It's totally okay if something you say doesn't land. Rather than shy away from these moments, embrace them as a learning opportunity.

- Give specific, constructive feedback.
- Offer options not advice. Explain the pros and cons of each option. Mentees must choose their own success, and mentors who force mentees to do it "their way" are not serving junior faculty well.
- Do Not - Go it alone. There's no reason you should know everything. Be aware of all the possible resources the H.E.R.O. program has to offer.

MAKE REFERRALS

Whenever your mentee needs help beyond your area of expertise let the program manager know that you are interested in connecting the mentee with others who are more knowledgeable than you so that you and the program manager can obtain the best resources together. Remember that while you may be more experienced than your mentee, you won't have the answer to every question, and that doesn't make you a terrible mentor. Great mentors recognize when there's a more relevant resource at hand—whether that's an article, book, or person in their network. If you feel that your relationship with your mentee is not a good fit and causing a hardship between the two of you please let the H.E.R.O. program manager know so that arrangements can be made to provide a better mentee/mentor solution.

- Do Not - Take things personally. Mentees come with their own personalities, their own trajectories, their own quirks. You can offer support, but do not take it personally if the mentee does not listen, listens but does not achieve responds negatively, etc.
- Do Not - Beat yourself up: If you have followed this checklist, and the mentee a) does not listen or b) does not get tenure, you still did what you were supposed to do.

MEETING WITH THE MENTEE

Meetings with mentees who are under 18 will be held primarily at the student's school and at times at HREI. If parent's permission is provided, mentor and mentee may meet at another location, such as a coffee shop or the library. The program manager should be informed when a meeting is scheduled outside of its regular location. Mentees who are 18 or older do not require parental sign off for meeting location but mentor should still inform the program manager to ensure safety standards are followed. Meetings should not occur past 7pm and any meetings after that time require program manager approval.

Being a mentor can be valuable for both you and the mentee but be careful not to unload too much of your own baggage on your mentee. Keep the focus on your mentee instead. It's easy to reminisce about your early days while offering advice, or to explain a problem based on what you know happened in the past. Historical context can be helpful, just as long as you aren't unconsciously using it to dismiss a challenge under the present circumstances ("that's just the way things work here") or, worse, tainting your mentee's perspective about working on particular teams, initiatives, or with particular people ("don't worry about so-and-so, they always do that"). If you find yourself talking about your own experience for the bulk of your time with your mentee, it's time to take a step back.

- You may share your phone number with mentees if you feel that is your best form of communication. Be mindful about discussing with mentee how phone number should be used for communication with each other. Typically email will be used to communicate with mentee.
- Different guidelines apply for CDA School District Mentees.

PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING

And yes, active listening *does* take practice—as well as persistence. It’s natural for our minds to run on their own, and you may find yourself mentally problem solving for your mentee while they’re still talking through a problem. Try to calm the inner voice that exclaims, “I have the perfect advice for this scenario!” and listen all the way through instead. You’re more likely to really hear mentee’s needs that way—both stated and implied. Ask questions to clarify their perspective and encourage their own thinking on the challenge at hand, rather than trying to jump in and solve it before they’ve finished. [There are many ways to be a better listener](#), of course—these are just a start.

MAINTAIN CONFIDENTIALITY

What your mentee tells you should be kept strictly confidential; that’s the basis of your relationship, after all, and it’s why your mentee is coming to you rather than, say, their counselor. The trust and shared vulnerability between you allows you to uncover your mentee’s true needs and to make progress on them. Keep those lips sealed, or you risk your relationship crumbling. If your mentee is facing an issue you think the H.E.R.O. program manager should help handle, then it’s best to speak with the program manager to help with the concern.

- For first-timers, mentorship can be a bit of a figure-it-out-as-you-go experience. But if you follow these guidelines, you’ll be able to provide real value to your mentee while getting something out of it yourself: win-win.

Mentorship Questions

What skills do you have that would be relevant to your position as a mentor?

What fields of work and/or study do you have experience in?

Do you volunteer or have you volunteered previously with other programs or organizations in the community? If so, where?

Do you have any previous experience as a mentor or mentee? If so, please describe your experience and what you gained from it.

Why are you interested in becoming a mentor?

Explain what mentorship means to you.

Would you be willing to engage in personal discussion and answer questions from your mentee in a supportive and constructive manner?

How many hours can you commit per week to this program and on which days? Be realistic about the commitment and time involved. (3 to 4 hours per month)

Would you like to be a speaker on a particular topic? If so, what topic would you prefer to present on, and what is its relevance in aiding young adults?

Do you have any concerns about the mentorship process or program?

What would be the best way to contact you?