

Mentor Handbook

(A Guide for Mentoring Ex-Offenders)



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Mentoring

Introduction	Page 5
History of Mentoring	Page 6
Mentoring of Ex-offenders Defined.....	Pages 6-7
Characteristics of a Mentor	Pages 8-10

II. The Mentoring Relationship

The Mentoring Relationship	Pages 10-11
Stages of the Relationship	Pages 11-12
Expectations Mentors Should Have About Their Relationship	Page 12
Taking Ownership of Expectations	Page 12
Unrealistic Expectations as a Barrier in the Development of Healthy Mentoring Relationships.....	Page 13
Setting Boundaries (Do's and Don'ts).....	Pages 13-16
Mentor Support Network.....	Page 17
Program Support	Page 17

III. Communication

Communication	Pages 18-21
Talking About Difficult Issues	Page 22
General Guidelines	Page 23
Steps to Handling Difficult Issues	Pages 23-25
Tips for Communicating in Difficult Situations	Page 25
Diversity.....	Page 26
One-on-One Mentoring Versus Group Mentoring	Page 27
Motivational Interviewing (MI)	Pages 28-30

Barriers	Pages 30-31
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IV. Resources/Activities

Activity to Determine Employment Readiness or Address Barriers in the Offenders' Life	Pages 32-33
Nine Reentry Skill Areas	Pages 34-35
Federal Post-Conviction Risk Assessment (PCRA).....	Page 36
Content of the Federal Post-Conviction Risk Assessment (PCRA).....	Page 37
Relapse Prevention Plan	Pages 38-40

V. The Mentor Component with the Program

The Mentor Component with the Program	Page 41
Stakeholders	Page 41
Program Overview and Mission	Pages 41-42
Keeping Mentors Engaged in Mentoring Activities	Page 42
Position Description: Mentor Volunteer	Page 43
Mentor Participation Agreement	Page 44
Post Conviction Supervision	Pages 45-46
Conclusion	Page 48
Resources	Page 49
Evaluation	
Appendix	

**“Never doubt that
a small group of
thoughtful,
committed citizens
can change the
world; indeed it’s
the only thing that
ever has.”**

Margaret Mead



I. MENTORING

INTRODUCTION

Explosive growth in the number of people on probation or parole has propelled the population of the American corrections system to more than 7.3 million. Recent reports published by the Pew Center on the States indicate that one in every 100 people in this country is confined in prison or jail and one in 31 individuals is behind bars, on probation or parole. Of those released, 67.5% will be rearrested within three years. Having a meaningful job with a livable wage and reducing the barriers to employment have proven to reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Given that 67% of released prisoners are rearrested within three years, there is a clear need for a multi-faceted strategy to address the many contributors to this cycle of rearrest. Mentoring can serve as one among an array of interventions to assist ex-offenders in transitioning successfully back to the community.

Mentoring is a relatively new strategy for assisting adult, ex-offenders in transitioning successfully from prison to the community. Historically, mentoring has been more commonly used with school-aged youth and children of incarcerated parents to prevent contact with the criminal justice system.



As a Mentor Volunteer you have the opportunity to help make a difference in another person's life, the mentee/ex-offender. The term mentee and ex-offender will be used interchangeably throughout this handbook. Not all of those reentering society after incarceration are ready to change. Those who are and who have a desire to reshape their lives may have a very hard time adjusting and being accepted into society.

As a mentor, you play an important role in helping the ex-offender transition to become a better person and productive citizen. Ex-offenders do not always immediately see the benefits of having a mentor. You may ask the mentee, why he/she is participating in the respective program and the mentor relationship to gain a better understanding of the mentees' perspective. In working with ex-offenders you may also cast a critical eye as to what is fact versus fiction as you interact and communicate with the mentee, as not all the mentees may be vested in the program. As you make a difference in the mentees' life and begin to assist the mentee in establishing an action plan or goals to overcome barriers/obstacles in their life, understand the need to validate or seek verification as to goal attainment. A simple "yes" or "no" from the mentee may not suffice to ensure completion of targeted goals. Being a Mentor Volunteer can be a rewarding experience for both the mentor, as well as the recipient mentee.



HISTORY OF MENTORING

Mentors have always been recognized as some of the most important influences in a person's life. The mentoring tradition and its' importance can be traced to the earliest myths and legends in written history. In fact, the term "mentor" is taken from Homer's *Odyssey*, in which Ulysses asks his friend Mentor to counsel and guide his son during his absence in the Trojan War. In ancient Greek, the word came to mean "steadfast" and "enduring." Throughout history, the relationship has been naturally duplicated and refined in hundreds of ways – in apprentice and master, student and teacher, and friend and counselor. The role has been highlighted in classical story after story. The mentor relationship has always been a valuable one by allowing a person to experience new ideas, see a way of living outside his immediate reality, and define him or herself in the context of that relationship. In Western thought, the term mentor has become synonymous with anyone who is a wise teacher, guide, and friend.

Although the word mentor is now widely understood and the formal practice of mentoring widely acknowledged, only two decades ago the community at large was not aware of the term "mentoring." This realization can be understood in the context of societal growth and change. The importance of the role of mentors, the change in society's availability of mentors, and the current research supporting their necessity, have led to increased use of mentors.

MENTORING OF EX-OFFENDERS DEFINED

Definition

"Mentoring" is defined as a relationship over a prolonged period of time between two or more people where caring volunteers assist ex-offenders in successfully and permanently reentering their communities by providing consistent support as needed, guidance, and encouragement that impacts the ex-offenders in developing positive social relationships and achieving program outcomes such as job retention, family reunification, reduced recidivism, etc. The overall goal is to reduce recidivism and ultimately enhance community safety.

While many current efforts pair mentoring with assistance in obtaining and sustaining employment, the goal of mentoring is broadly focused on addressing ex-offenders' needs for pro-social relationships and engaging them in the productively in the community.



Since the goal of mentoring is to help ex-offenders build positive relationships, mentors and mentees should be encouraged to engage in informal, social interactions...even if mentoring sessions still include structured activities.

Mentors are coaches. Like coaches in sports, mentors inspire, guide, support, and nurture others. In education, sports, and other professions, mentoring relationships are considered important to the success of the mentee. Mentoring relationships can be relatively short-term (a year or two), or long-term, lasting a lifetime. However, the goal in mentoring ex-offenders is to foster skills that lead to a self-reliant and family sustaining lifestyle.

A mentor is a caring guide, a wise advisor, a partner on the journey, and a trusted friend. A mentor is one who can serve as a mirror for the mentee – showing them both who they are and who they can become. A mentor is one who can help the mentee feel comfortable in their own skin and appreciate their gifts, while at the same time exposing them to new opportunities and modes of thinking. Finally, a mentor is ultimately one who can establish a strong connection with their mentee and can in turn use that connection as a catalyst for positive change and growth.

Defining what a mentor is not:

- 1) A mentor is not a parent – A mentor is not there to take over the role of a parent.
- 2) A mentor is not all knowing – A mentor who comes in with an “I know best” agenda runs the risk of losing the trust of his/her mentee or offering ineffective advice.
- 3) A mentor is not a tutor – A mentor can be there to offer resources and to provide help, but only if and when the mentee wants it.
- 4) A mentor is not a provider – The mentor is not a source of financial support. By freeing the relationship from monetary dependency, it can allow it to grow without undue pressure or expectation. This does not mean that a mentor cannot occasionally foot the bill of an outing or activity, but mentors should not feel obligated. This should be the exception and not the norm. If asked, mentors may help to find resources for support, but taking on the role of direct financial support can seriously jeopardize the relationship.
- 5) A mentor is not a savior – It is more important to focus on the relationship than on goals of salvation, enrichment, or betterment. Goals come only after relationship and you never know what those goals might be.



CHARACTERISTICS OF A MENTOR

Those who decide to be mentors often have strong reasons for volunteering. Mentors should ask themselves why they decided to mentor and if their answer is strong enough to be their bridge over troubled waters. Although mentor support is very important, the most successful mentors are those who have an armor of resilience or self-sustaining energy built-in to their motivation and mentoring. A mentor's purpose for mentoring needs to be stronger than any of the challenges that may tempt them to accept defeat. It is important for a mentor to be a stable and fixed part of a mentee's life during difficult times in the relationship. There is very little immediate gratification in mentoring. Unlike other volunteering opportunities, the impact mentors have in the lives of mentees may be difficult to discern. Mentoring requires a leap of faith and a deep sense of commitment. It also requires support from the mentoring agency.



A Well-Balanced Temperament

If you have too many problems yourself, you may have trouble helping others. Don't add to the anxiety of the ex-offender/mentee by working out your own problems through them.

Dependability

If you have taken on a particular commitment, follow through. Remember that the mentee has possibly been let down too many times already.

Trust

This is a sensitive and important issue to remember when relating to the mentee. Ex-offenders generally have learned to be suspicious of everyone. Your effectiveness

depends upon an honest relationship (rapport). Do all you can within the boundaries of the mentor program to build a trusting relationship with the ex-offender/mentee.

People will not follow a leader they do not trust. Trust is built on many things:

Time. Take time to listen and give feedback.

Respect. Give the mentee respect, and he/she will return it with trust.

Unconditional Positive Regard. Show acceptance of the person.

Sensitivity. Anticipate the feelings and needs of the mentee.

Touch. Give encouragement – a handshake, high five, or virtual pat on the back.

Perseverance

If your meetings are not going too well, don't quit. It sometimes takes a while for trusting relationships to form. If difficulties arise, don't be afraid to ask for help.

Understanding

Try to be generally understanding, but don't be naïve. Appreciate a problem, but don't make it your own. This process is about empowerment of the mentee, not dependency.

Communication

Listen, share, laugh, talk, and act as you would with a friend. If you have difficulties relating to the mentee or if communication problems arise, please consult with the Program/Mentor Coordinator.

A Mentor of an ex-offender, returning citizen, crime victim, or their family member must:

- Be nonjudgmental, nurturing, supportive, honest, trustworthy, reliable, and consistent.
- Maintain confidential communications. Don't gossip.
- Maintain boundaries with the mentee.
- Refrain from asking questions out of personal curiosity, rather ask questions to further the growth of the mentee and your relationship.
- Have a commitment to the growth and success of the mentee.
- Coordinate the mentoring relationship through activities in the community.
- Be accountable to the mentee and hold the mentee accountable.

- Have a genuine concern for the ex-offender, their families, and victims.
- Have the ability to encourage and be supportive without creating a dependent relationship.
- Apply the same principles and standards presented to the mentee as standards in your own life.
- Ask for help when confronted with situations beyond your own resources and expertise.
- Be free from drugs and/or alcohol addiction.
- Understand and empathize with the challenges of the mentee without letting them become excuses.



II. THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Mentoring is a relationship over a prolonged period of time between two or more people where the mentor provides consistent support and as needed guidance to the mentee as they travel through life or a period of time in the mentees' life.

- Mentoring can help fill the gap of a relationship which may be absent from the mentee's life. It can expose them to new information and this may help them make better decisions about their current or future lives.
- Mentoring is about believing in the unlimited potential of the mentee. It maintains high expectations for the mentee while allowing the mentee to reach those expectations in their own unique time frame.
- Mentoring is about time and patience.
- Mentoring is about empowering the mentee, not creating a replica of our own ideals or personalities.

Research of successful mentoring practices has pointed to five key areas as critical in developing healthy relationships.

1) **The Relationship is the Intervention** – Those mentors who take the time to develop trust and get to know their mentees are able to create a nurturing environment for the mentee to take positive steps in their growth. Successful mentors focus on relationship building and not outcomes.

2) **Mentors Take Responsibility for the Relationship** – Maintaining a relationship in a normal setting is hard enough as it is. Maintaining a relationship in a contrived setting with an individual who is often going through a great deal of change and internal turmoil is even tougher. Successful mentors need to be consistent, persistent, and dependable. They need to be able to follow through on their commitment even when things get tough.

3) **The Longer the Duration of the Match the Greater the Impact** – It takes time to develop trust and to establish strong bonds. If that bond is essential for mentoring to have a positive impact then it is easy to see why the longer a relationship lasts, the more likely it is the relationship will make a positive impact in the life of the mentee.

4) **Respect the Mentee's Viewpoint** – Mentors who pay attention to what the mentee wants to do during meetings seem to do better than those who just want to impose their own agenda.

5) **Rely on the Program for Support** - Though mentoring is generally a one-to-one relationship, it takes a whole team of committed individuals to make it work. Mentors should feel comfortable seeking support from program staff and program staff should mentor the mentor. Without this support, mentors are more likely to encounter frustration and have a negative experience.

STAGES OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Stage 1: Developing rapport and building trust

- Be predictable and consistent.
- Be prepared for “testing”.
- Establish confidentiality.
- Set goals.

Stage 2: Building the relationship and reaching goals (Once trust has been established, the mentor/mentee relationship starts to work towards goals established during Stage 1)

- The relationship develops a closeness.
- Affirm the uniqueness of the relationship.
- The relationship may be rocky or smooth. (Mentors should be prepared for rough periods of time).
- Rely on staff/resource support.

Stage 3: Closing the relationship

- Identify natural emotions, such as grief, denial, and resentment.
- Provide opportunities for saying goodbye in a healthy, respectful, and affirming way.
- Address appropriate situations for staying in touch.



EXPECTATIONS MENTORS SHOULD HAVE ABOUT THEIR RELATIONSHIP:

- Mentors should take responsibility for the relationship.
- Mentors should get to know their mentee first before they move on to assisting in any challenges their mentee will likely face.
- Mentors will need a larger network of support to be successful.

TAKING OWNERSHIP OF EXPECTATIONS

Self –reflection can serve as a powerful tool in guiding mentors to take ownership of their own conscious and unconscious expectations. Questions to help mentors reflect on include:

- What outcomes do you think will come about as a result of your mentoring relationship?
- What activities do you envision yourself doing with the mentee?
- What do you think being a mentor will be like?
- How do you think you and your mentee will interact together?
- What do you think your mentee will look like, act like, and be like?
- What challenges do you think will come up in your mentoring relationship and how do you think you will handle them?
- What do you think would challenge your ability to continue serving as a mentor?
- What strengths and needs do you bring to other relationships?

UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS AS A BARRIER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHY MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS:

Some misguided expectations include:

- I know what the mentee wants and needs.
- I will always know what to do.
- I will notice positive change.
- I will be thanked for my service.
- We will get along splendidly.
- My mentee will not cancel appointments.
- My mentee will show up for every meeting.
- My mentee will be thrilled to see me each time.
- We will like each other right away.
- It will be fun and not much work.
- I will like my mentee all the time.



SETTING BOUNDARIES

Some mentors may find the idea of setting boundaries to be harsh, mean, or controlling. Boundary setting is important so that each person in a mentoring relationship is clear about his/her role. They help establish and nurture trust in a relationship. Most significantly, they help protect the mentee and the mentor, as well as the program.

Do's and Don'ts



As a Mentor Do:

- 1) Be yourself - You are coming alongside a person who is looking for a new direction, a new perspective and a new way of doing life. The greatest value you bring to the mentoring relationship is yourself and your willingness to share from your own life experiences.
- 2) Speak the truth – Know your own strengths and weaknesses in this area. The truth must be tempered with compassion.
- 3) Act as a friend – Make sure your relationship is one of being a friend. There will be times when you will need to hold the mentee accountable.
- 4) Use wisdom – Use wisdom to avoid being manipulated or drawn into any unhealthy and/or unsafe dealings with the mentee. When in doubt contact the Mentor Coordinator and/or other mentors. Be a positive influence.
- 5) Be a good listener – A few basics to being a good listener:
 - Avoid formulating a response while the other person is talking.
 - Ask questions for clarity.
 - Avoid talking before the other person is finished.
 - Maintain eye contact.
 - Be aware of body language and emotions behind the spoken words.
 - Place your cell phone on vibrate and do not answer calls while meeting with the mentee.
 - Don't feel like you have to be the answer person.
- 6) Treat the mentee as you would want to be treated – Put yourself in the mentee's shoes. This means understanding the fullness of their life experiences.
- 7) Be adequately prepared and on time for any meetings or outings – Be an example/role model. Also, set boundaries with regards to the frequency of meetings and phone calls. This will help protect the mentor's ability to be there for the mentee long term. Consistency and frequency of meetings are important elements of a successful mentoring relationship. However, spending too much time together can create dependency and it will lead to the development of unrealistic expectations about what a mentoring relationship can and cannot do. Mentors and mentees can create a calendar of activities together by scheduling their meetings and the days they will talk on the phone. If a mentor does not set boundaries in regards to their personal time, they can unknowingly create the very conditions that will lead them to burn out and a premature ending of the

mentoring relationship. Mentors should keep activities with the mentee simple and reasonable.

8) Decide with the mentee what they need to work on – The mentee needs to take ownership of those areas in their life they need to work on. If you tell them what they need to work on without their input they will be more apt to blame you if they fail. It is possible, if the mentee has served a lot of time that he/she is used to others telling him/her what to do. They might have a history of rebelling and blaming, but have also become comfortable with others telling them what to do. This dependence prevents them from taking responsibility for their own choices and behavior. HELP set goals; don't set goals for the individual.

9) Help the mentee make decisions on their own – When faced with choices, it is an opportunity to help the mentee see both sides and work through making the decision. Remind the mentee: choosing not to make a decision is to choose to live with the consequences of indecisiveness. A mentor's role is not to solve all the mentee's problems single handedly. Seek help from program staff and community resources as necessary.

10) Be free to say "no." – As a mentor, you want to be a help whenever and however you can. You will do yourself, others, and especially the mentee, a great disservice if you don't exercise the freedom to say "no." If the situation allows for a delayed response, it is easier to undo a "no" response versus a "yes" response. Don't feel pressured into giving an immediate response.

As a Mentor Do Not:

1) Call wives/husbands, girlfriends/boyfriends on behalf of the mentee.

2) Make promises you can't keep – know your limitations. Don't commit yourself or anyone else to do anything that you are not sure is possible. Chances are the mentee has experienced the pain of many broken promises. You will build confidence in the relationship if you avoid making promises you can't keep.

3) Give legal advice – You can share any past experiences you may have had but make sure the process and the outcome is presented as your experience and not as a representation of the way things are done.

4) Side with mentee against authority or bad-mouth the system – No system is perfect and things are going to happen. When your mentee has a conflict with authority it is an opportunity to encourage them in a new attitude and perspective on authority. Even if there was an injustice, you can share the proper way to respond that will bring peace to your mentee rather than more trouble.

5) Bad- mouth others – Be careful not to allow your own biases to cloud your conversations with your mentee. Instead be respectful of others.

6) Enter into business dealings with mentee – Your mentee may be extremely intelligent and highly talented but entering into business dealings will add facets to the relationship that are not beneficial and can undermine the purpose of the mentoring.

7) Feel like you have to have all the answers – You do not have all the answers. Your willingness to be available, to be an encouragement and to help is invaluable. If you are in need of guidance or information, seek assistance.

8) Give or lend money to the mentees. It will destroy the friendship/relationship. There are community resources available to the ex-offender/mentee. Lending money sets up inequalities in the relationship, or may cause the mentee to feel discomfort if he/she cannot pay back the debt. You are not the mentees ATM machine. In the complexity of day-to-day interactions, setting boundaries around money issues is not so easy. Who should pay for outings? Should a mentor help in a financial crisis? It is important to remember if a mentee is going through financial difficulty, the mentors can help by connecting the mentee to the appropriate community resources and by being supportive of their emotional needs through their friendship. Gift giving should be reserved to special occasions (i.e., birthdays, holidays, graduations, etc.) and should be kept to a reasonable amount. Excessive gift giving takes attention away from the relationship. Mentors need to send out a strong message that the time spent together is a gift. The gift of their time and friendship is more valuable than any material thing they can give.

9) Say “yes” to the request of the mentee without checking first with the Mentor Coordinator. If the mentee asks for something, no matter how seemingly minor, tell him/her you will need to check first until a precedence has been set in the program. You’ll need to consider how this might affect the friendship, or the precedence that a decision may set. It is easier to say “no” first, then later change the response to “yes”.

10) Self-disclose – Mentors need to be careful about the type of personal information they share with the mentee. When disclosing personal information, it is important for mentors to ask themselves, “What purpose does it serve to share this information?”

- Mentors should be careful not to burden the mentee with their own life problems.
- Mentors should be careful not to disclose information that may not be appropriate.
- Mentors should be careful not to shut down communication by talking about personal experiences instead of listening first.



You are expected to carry out the mentor relationship in a mature, responsible manner.



MENTOR SUPPORT NETWORK

Mentoring relationships by their very nature can be stressful and mentors may not readily see the “fruits of their labor.” Mentors will need to rely on a larger network of support to get the reinforcement and support they need. Mentees may not thank the mentor for their time. Both the mentor and mentee may be unaware that growth is taking place. A support network provides the mentor the proper context and the right lens through which to look at a mentoring relationship. The support network may vary depending on the particular type of program the mentor is providing service to.

PROGRAM SUPPORT

Aside from training and monitoring mentors, programs must be able to allow the mentoring relationship to take root, while providing support where needed. At a minimum, programs should support the mentoring relationship by:

- Offering meeting location(s)
- Providing necessary resources/materials
- Offering ideas for appropriate activities
- Providing assistance in determining the mentee’s goals
- Being accessible for questions or concerns
- Stepping in when a relationship is not working
- Sponsoring events
- Providing recognition to both mentors and mentees for their contributions

III. COMMUNICATION

Throughout the Handbook, we've discussed building trust and rapport in the mentor relationship, as well as working towards establishing goals in the mentee's life. All of this takes communication and keeping in mind different communication styles work with different people. Also, you may encounter difficult situations you will need to work through with the mentee.



Communication

Each person has their own communication style. A style of communication that works for one mentor might fail for another. In communication there is no one right way; instead, there are a variety of styles which may be effective.

Three basic communication skills:

1. Listening
2. Looking
3. Leveling

Listening - does not have to be passive. Done correctly, it can be as active as talking. To listen effectively:

Pay Attention...

- Try not to think ahead of what you or the other person will say next.
- Don't interrupt.
- Listen for the feeling underneath the words.
- Keep a clear and open mind; avoid or postpone making judgments.
- Encourage the speaker to continue or clarify what has been said utilizing reflective listening – This is often referred to as “mirroring” or “paraphrasing.”

Be a Good Listener by Reflecting and Clarifying Thoughts

Reflecting means sending back a person's message to help an individual clarify if the content of the message is accurate. You can ask a person, "I heard you say....is that what you said?" or "It sounds like....is really making you feel angry." Reflecting and clarifying will only be helpful if done in a sincere manner by someone who really cares.



Good Habits	Bad Habits
Opening your mind to new perspectives...	Closing your mind before hearing all the facts
Listening to the whole message	Hearing only part of what is being said
Listening with understanding	Making instant assumptions
Asking for clarification	Thinking you know what is being said
Getting the message without judgment	Putting the speaker down
Not interrupting	Interrupting before the speaker is finished
Listening for facts and feelings	Listening for facts only
Listening rather than pretending to listen	Faking attention
Creating a positive, comfortable environment	Creating or allowing distractions
Reflective listening	Ignoring feeling words
Identifying and replacing negative words	Reacting to trigger words without thinking how they are meant by the speaker reaction ahead of time

Looking – People communicate with verbal and non-verbal language. Pay attention to the whole person by doing the following:

- Watch the speaker's expressions (smiles, frowns, wrinkled forehead)
- Watch the speaker's body language (crossed arms, tapping fingers, eyes, looking at watch)
- Make eye contact
- Show you are interested by YOUR body language

(Keep in mind that in some cultures, eye contact and moving closer are not always acceptable or comfortable. Some cultures and individuals have different comfort levels about personal space.)

Leveling – means being honest about what you are feeling and thinking.

- Be honest in your response or disclosure.
- Speak for yourself using “I” statements.
- Accept and/or ask for clarifications on the speaker's (mentee's) feelings. DO NOT ASSUME you are sure what they are trying to say.
- Don't try to change the feeling or give advice without being asked and/or before you hear and evaluate all that is being said both verbally and non-verbally.

Three specific communication techniques:

1. Use “I messages”
2. Paraphrasing
3. Open-ended questions

Use “I” Messages – Most of the messages we send about behavior are “you” messages...messages that are directed at other people and have a high probability of putting them down, making them feel guilty, making them feel their needs are not important, and generally making them resist change. Examples of “you” messages are usually orders or commands (i.e., STOP doing that!). Other messages are in the form of shaming or blaming (i.e., YOU are making a mess). Other statements give solutions (i.e., YOU should forget that idea. You'd be better off doing this). In doing this, the responsibility for behavior change is taken away from the other person.

An “I” message allows a person who is affected by the behavior of another person to express the impact it has on him or her and, at the same time, leave the responsibility for modifying that behavior with the person who demonstrated that particular behavior.

In the case of a mentoring relationship, the open “I” message is one that allows the mentee to see how their actions affect others and how they themselves can be empowered to make their own decisions so that they can grow with the experience.

Paraphrasing – focuses on listening to the mentee first, then reflecting back both the content and feeling of what they've said. It is a helpful device in understanding mentees as well as developing a relationship. Paraphrasing often begins with a phrase that turns

attention back onto the speaker and the content or underlying message of what they are saying:

- So you're saying that...
- You think that...
- So the problem is...
- You're feeling that...
- And that made you feel...

Open-Ended Questions – are those questions which require a greater length of response and a greater investment of energy from the mentee than a “yes” or “no”. Mentors should try a combination of open-ended questions with close-ended ones to draw out information and allow the mentee to answer some questions with “yes” or “no”.

Examples:

- How do you feel about that situation?
- What are your reasons for ...?
- Can you give me an example?
- How does that affect you?
- What do you want to do about it?

Roadblocks to Effective Communication

1. Ordering, directing, commanding
2. Moralizing, preaching, should's or ought's
3. Teaching, lecturing, giving logical arguments
4. Judging, criticizing, blaming
5. Withdrawing, distracting, sarcasm, humoring, diverting



TALKING ABOUT DIFFICULT ISSUES

Difficult issues do and will come up in any mentoring relationship. It is important to think about the mentee and the issues you can see coming up in this mentoring relationship. Difficult issues can be thought of as belonging to three broad categories:

1. Delicate topics
2. Crisis requiring intervention
3. Issues of concern



Delicate Topics

- Peer pressure
- Hygiene
- Self-image/personal insecurities
- Cultural/sexual identity
- Work performance

Crisis Requiring Intervention

- Abusive relationship
- Chemical dependency
- Severe violence
- Arrest
- Depression/Suicide ideations
- Mental illness
- Other trauma

Issues of Concern

- Drug and alcohol use

The issues listed may have significant implications for the life of the mentee and the mentor needs to report these concerns to the Program Manager/Coordinator. However, these issues do not necessarily require direct intervention. Many of these issues are ongoing conditions that mentees face.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

Here are some general guidelines for dealing with issues which are of greatest concern for most mentoring programs. These difficult situations should be handled with the utmost concern and always with the support of program staff.

Past Traumas – needless to say, these can be some of the most difficult things for mentees to talk about, or even think about. Mentors need to be aware that treading carelessly into trauma issues has the potential to trigger very extreme reactions. A mentor in conversation should not bring up these issues. Mentees should be allowed the privacy and space to broach these subjects only if and when they are inclined.

Traumatic topics may include:

- Physical Abuse
- Neglect
- Abandonment
- Sexual Abuse/Incest
- Rape
- Emotional Abuse
- Loss/Bereavement
- Extreme Injuries or Illness
- Family Disruption
- Community Violence/Gang Affiliation
- Poverty
- Natural Disasters
- Terminal/Major Illnesses

Mental/Emotional Problems – A mentor is not the therapist for the mentee. This does not mean that a mentor cannot talk about mental or emotional issues that a mentee brings up. However, mentors need to be aware when they are beginning to cross the boundary and entering into the domain of a therapist or counselor. Mentors are encouraged to call program staff so that the agency can provide the appropriate referral to community resources.

STEPS TO HANDLING DIFFICULT ISSUES

Putting the Mentee at Ease

The mentor's ability to help the mentee feel safe in sharing personal information is key to both the development of trust in the relationship and to offering the best possible support for the mentee in his/her situation. These concerns should take precedence over attempts to change the mentee's behavior or to influence their decisions.

Below are some tips that can assist mentors in putting the mentee at ease.

- Stay calm
- Use body language to communicate attentiveness – maintain eye contact, sit at same level, etc.
- Avoid judgmental statements like “Why would you do something like that?” or “I think you know better....”
- Be honest if you are getting emotional or upset, but never accuse or berate!
- Let the mentee know that you are glad he/she came to you.
- Reassure the mentee that his/her confidentiality will be honored.
- Use tact but be honest.
- Allow the mentee to talk at his/her own pace – don’t force an issue.
- Don’t pry – allow the mentee to bring up topics he/she is comfortable with.

Honoring the Mentee’s Right to Self-Determination

Self-determination is the right that every human should have to make decisions for his or herself.

Below are some tips for promoting and respecting a mentee’s right to self-determination.

- Focus on his/her feelings and needs rather than jumping to problem-solving.
- When issues have been talked about, ask, “What do you think you would like to do about this situation,” and “How would you like for me to help?”
- If you are not comfortable with what he/she wants to do, ask yourself why before you decide whether to say so.
- If what he/she wants to do is not possible, explain so gently and apologize.
- Ask what alternative solutions would make him/her comfortable.
- Encourage critical thinking through questions and reflections.
- Use the words, “I don’t know – what do you think?”

Once the mentor has successfully addressed the mentee’s feelings and has processed with the mentee in a way that honors their need for self-determination, the mentor can further assist the mentee in locating resources and options. At this stage the mentor should be prepared to assist and the agency should be prepared for any interventions that are needed.

- Know your appropriate role as a mentor.
- Be honest with the mentee if confidentiality does not hold.
- Suggest that your support team may have some thoughts if you don’t know what to do.
- Ask the mentee if he/she would like to talk to the agency with you if necessary.
- Provide information if the mentee is unaware of resources or options.
- Brainstorm with the mentee and be creative in finding a solution. There is usually more than one way to handle a situation, and this process is educational for the mentee.

- Offer to accompany the mentee if he/she is uncomfortable with something he/she has decided to do.
- Be collaborative – you are a team.
- Follow through with any and all commitments.



TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING IN DIFFICULT SITUATIONS

- Put yourself in another person's place. Try to actually step into the other person's shoes for a moment to feel and see the situation from his or her point of view. Remember that cultural diversity, life situations and experiences all combine to acculturate your mentee's point of view.
- Suspend judgment: Try to be as objective as possible as you really listen to what the mentee has to say.
- Non-verbal communication: At times this communication can tell you as much or more than anything being said. Look for clues in the mentee's body to see what he/she is really saying.
- "Own" your problem: By owning your own problems, you encourage the mentee to do the same. For example, if your mentee missed an appointment with you, it would be important to tell him/her how this made you feel without using "blame or shame" communication styles. Using "I" messages, you can own your own feelings. An example: "I was disappointed last week when you did not show up to meet me".
- Address the situation: Don't feel afraid to say what is really on your mind. Encourage the mentee to talk to you about how they see a situation without screening their feelings to make it "palatable" for you. Don't interrupt them or put words in their mouths or interpret the situation for them.

DIVERSITY

In the mentoring relationship, mentors will be paired with the same-sex mentees. The mentors must have an awareness of the cultural diversity of the mentees.



Diversity within mentoring can be defined as any significant, personal, or cultural difference which has the potential of effecting the development of the mentoring relationship. It is important to realize that diversity is broader than simply an ethnic distinction. Instead, there are many elements and components of diversity. These include:

- Country of origin
- Socio-economic background
- Level of education
- Level of acculturation in the U.S.
- Religion
- Generation
- Age
- Color of skin
- Ethnicity
- Gender
- Marital status
- Sexual orientation



ONE-ON-ONE MENTORING VERSUS GROUP MENTORING

Each program will establish the preferred way or method for the mentor and mentee relationship and activities to proceed. Mentoring activities may include one-on-one mentoring or group mentoring. Presently, there is no evidence to suggest that one type achieves better outcomes than the other. It is also unclear whether pre-release or post-release mentoring services are more effective.

One-on-One Mentoring

One-on-One mentoring matches one offender with one mentor in order for them to develop a supportive relationship through regular interaction. Common activities in one-on-one mentoring include meeting in public locations to talk (for example, restaurants) or attending church and church events, sports events, or other recreational events.

Group Mentoring

While group mentoring might not offer the same benefits as one-on-one relationships, it offers a viable solution to any mentor recruitment challenges. It offers the dynamic of interacting with peers and offers offenders who are uncomfortable with one-on-one mentoring with an alternative.

Consistency and intensity may matter, with past experiences suggesting groups stay consistent with two mentors working with about 4-6 mentees. Intensity also matters: programs recommend that sessions last for about 2 hours and occur at least every two weeks. The time frames will depend on the program for which you serve as a mentor.

While some programs for group mentoring may follow a curriculum for each meeting, others conduct unstructured meetings. For structured meetings, elements include:

- A presentation on new information/topics each week (oftentimes identified by mentees) followed by a period of discussion,
- Sharing exercises for mentees to talk about what has been happening in their lives since the last session and/or,
- Refreshments and/or incentives to keep participants interested in continued attendance,
- What do the mentee(s) want to talk about?

MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING

While Motivational Interviewing (MI) may not be utilized in the program in which you are a mentor, information regarding is outlined in the following section.

Motivational Interviewing (MI) is a directive client-centered counseling style for eliciting behavior change by helping clients to explore and resolve ambivalence. MI focuses on the discrepancy between one's present behavior and one's broader goals. MI is both a set of techniques and a philosophy, or style, with essential elements that are more important than any particular technique. It was introduced by Dr. William Miller in 1983. Dr. Miller describes MI as a way of talking to people. Rather than inserting motivation, you are calling out of the person what they already have as skills and motivations.



Principles of Motivational Interviewing:

Roll with resistance

- Avoid arguing for change.
- Resistance behavior should not be directly opposed.
- New perspectives are invited but not imposed.
- The mentee is the primary resource in finding answers and solutions
- Resistance behavior is a signal to respond differently.

Support Self-Efficacy

- Belief in the possibility of change is an important motivator.
- The mentee is responsible for choosing and carrying out personal change.
- The mentor's own belief in the mentee's ability to change becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Express Empathy

- Acceptance facilitates change.
- Skillful reflective listening is fundamental
- Seek to understand the mentee's perspective without judging, criticizing or blaming.
- Ambivalence is normal.

Develop Discrepancy

- The mentee rather than the mentor should present the arguments for change.
- Change is motivated by a perceived discrepancy between present behavior and important goals and values.

Avoid Arguments

Two Motivational Interviewing Strategies:

1. Evocative Questions
2. Affirmations

Evocative Questions – gently help the mentee see the value of change. If an evocative question is successful, the mentee will engage in “change talk”, beginning to concretely and independently express the need for change in his/her life. Evocative questions are open-ended questions, beginning with “what” and “how”.

Sample Evocative Questions

- ▶ What worries you about your current situation?
- ▶ What makes you think you need to do something about your current situation?
- ▶ How would you like things to be different in your life?
- ▶ What do you think would work for you if you decided to change?
- ▶ What is there about your life you or other people might be concerned with?
- ▶ What are some of your concerns about your life?
- ▶ What are some of the things about your situation that worry others around you?
- ▶ If you choose not to make a change, what do you feel would be worst thing that might eventually happen?
- ▶ How does your current situation fit your life goals?
- ▶ If you choose to make a change in your situation, how might things be different for you? For your family?

Affirmations – are genuine compliments. When compliments are offered sincerely, they affirm and promote self-efficacy. Self-efficacy, the belief that one can perform a behavior or accomplish a task, is a very important motivator. A belief in the possibility of change is a foundation for future positive action.

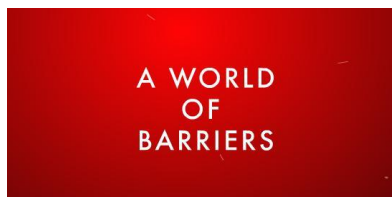
Sample Affirmations

- ▶ Thank you for coming on time. It helps keep things on track.
- ▶ Thank you for telling me. It's clear you've thought a lot about this issue.

- ▶ Your willingness to answer hard questions shows you're serious about improving your situation.
- ▶ I appreciate you taking the time to thoughtfully consider all my questions.

BARRIERS

In one-on-one mentoring or group mentoring, barriers the mentee encounters should be addressed. It is important to understand barriers and opportunities to overcome those barriers. (Refer to Appendix – MythBusters)



A barrier is ... any problem, real or imagined, which is an obstacle to the mentee.

Personal Barriers

- Employment
- Housing/ Food/Clothing
- Healthcare/Mental Health
- Transportation
- Lack of Education/Training
- Criminal Record
- Childcare/Custody Issues
- Substance Abuse
- Domestic Violence

Corrections Related Barriers

- Supervision restrictions/Reporting requirements
- Restrictions related to nature of crime/License restrictions
- Treatment meetings
- Fines

Legal or Societal Barriers

- Public housing restrictions for drug offenses
- Food stamp restrictions
- Voting restrictions
- Checking account restrictions

Mentors may discuss what their thoughts are about how realistic the ex-offenders/mentees are regarding the number and difficulty of the barriers they face upon release.

Questions to Access Barriers and Strengths – Ask mentees....

- How ready do you feel to manage your life outside of prison?
- What else do you need in order to live independently?
- Who is responsible for your life after you leave prison?
- What are some of the challenges you expect to have when released or that you are having since release?
- What will be some of the most important things to attend to as you start your life in the community, or to maintain your successful transition?
- What steps will you take to get a job? To keep a job?
- What do you think are your best work-related skills?
- What will you need to do to stay out of prison?
- What are some interests you would like to pursue in your personal life and at work?

As you continue the mentoring relationship, it will be necessary for you to address the barriers the mentee has in their life and to assess and/or address their reentry skills. The Bureau of Prisons (BOP) has identified nine skill areas. An Activity (See pages 32-33) may be used to determine employment readiness or address barriers in the offender's life. The mentor may assist the mentee in developing SMART Goals or creating an Action Plan, so the mentee will have a roadmap to address identified barriers.



IV. RESOURCES/ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY

Activity to Determine Employment Readiness or Address Barriers in the Offenders' Life

Name: _____ Date: _____

Each of the 33 items should be marked in at least ONE of the categories, but may be marked in ALL four categories. Mentor and mentee should determine whether an action plan should be developed to address employment readiness or barriers.

	Past Problem	Present Problem	Potential Future Problem	No Problem	Action Plan Needed Yes/No
1. Childcare Plan					
2. Childcare Back-up: (sick, vacation, holiday)					
3. Special Needs Child					
4. Summer Childcare					
5. Transportation					
6. Transportation Back-up					
7. Stable Housing					
8. Homelessness					
9. Housing Repair (plumbing, electric)					
10. Spoken English					
11. Mental Health					
12. Physical Health (Medical Concerns)					
13. Basic Math Skills (add, subtract, multiply)					
14. Difficulty Reading					
15. Difficulty learning new things					
16. Difficulty Sleeping					
17. Difficulty eating or overeating					
18. Difficulty managing stress					
19. Inadequate social support (friends, family, church)					
20. Legal problems					
21. Credit/debt problems					
22. Family Crisis					
23. Domestic Violence					
24. Drug or Alcohol Addictions					
25. Difficulty managing anger					

26. Difficulty handling criticism					
27. Difficulty with work attendance					
28. Difficulty with work punctuality					
29. Difficulty with co-workers					
30. Difficulty with a supervisor					
31. Problems with immigration					
32. Cultural issues (religion, gender roles, clothing, scheduling)					
33. Difficulty with age, weight, race, gender, sexual orientation, prejudice by employer					
34. Employment					
Other:					



NINE REENTRY SKILL AREAS

There are nine reentry skill areas which have been identified as significant in impacting an offender's successful transition. It is important for the mentor to be aware of these reentry skill areas to ensure the mentee is demonstrating these skills in the community. Mentors can assist mentees in addressing deficits in these skill areas by referring them to appropriate community resources. Ex-offenders released from the Federal Bureau of Prisons may have a copy of their Inmate Skill Development Plan, which they can share with you as a point of reference to work from. (Refer to Appendix)



- 1) Daily Living Skills
- 2) Mental Health Skills
- 3) Wellness Skills
- 4) Interpersonal Skills
- 5) Academic Skills
- 6) Cognitive Skills
- 7) Vocational/Career Skills
- 8) Leisure Time Skills
- 9) Character Skills

Reentry Skills	Reentry Skills as Demonstrated in the Community
Daily Living Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Financial Management - Food Management - Personal Hygiene/Sanitation - Transportation - Identification - Housing - RRC Placement - Family Care 	Displays independent living skills commensurate with community opportunities to include maintenance of a clean residence, a responsible budget to include a savings account, meal preparation, appropriate personal hygiene and appearance and proper etiquette. Obtains, maintains, and/or contributes financially to a legal residence and any necessary transportation. Obeys rules and regulations and local, state, and federal laws. Is able to identify and access community resources for basic needs.
Mental Health Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Substance Abuse Management - Mental Illness Management - Transitional Plan - Appropriate Sexual Behavior 	Maintains sound mental health through avoidance of substance abuse/dependence and other self-destructive behaviors and use of effective coping techniques. Participates in appropriate medication and/or treatment regime as necessary to address any acute or chronic mental health conditions.
Wellness Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health Promotion/Disease Prevention - Disease/Illness Management - Transitional Plan - Government Assistance 	Maintains physical well-being through health promotion and disease prevention strategies such as a healthy lifestyle and habits, routine medical care, regular exercise, and appropriate diet. Participates in appropriate medication and/or treatment regime as necessary to address any acute or chronic medical conditions.
Interpersonal Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationships - Family Ties/Support System - Parental Responsibility - Communication 	Relates appropriately and effectively with staff, peers, visitors, family, co-workers, neighbors and members of the community by observing basic social conventions and rules. Displays the ability to develop and maintain healthy relationships to include the avoidance of co-dependency. Avoids negative interpersonal influences.
Academic Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Intellectual Functioning - Literacy - Language - Computer Skills 	Participates and progresses in educational activities commensurate with ability and occupation to serve as foundational skills for other reentry skills. Reads, writes, and utilizes basic arithmetic at a level necessary to function in society.
Cognitive Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - General Behavior - Criminal History - Domestic Violence/Abuse - Criminal Behavior 	Engages in accurate self-appraisal by acknowledging and correcting irrational thinking patterns. Is cognizant of the importance of goal setting. Solves problems effectively, maintains self-control, and displays pro-social values. Acknowledges and appropriately corrects criminal thinking patterns and behaviors.
Vocational/Career Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Employment History - Career Development - Institution Work History - Post-Incarceration Employment 	Acquires and maintains employment in order to become self-sufficient and fulfill financial obligations. Engages in purposeful activity, develops abilities useful in the acquisition and maintenance of post-release employment and pursuit of career goals.
Leisure Time Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Leisure Time 	Engages in meaningful recreational activities and hobbies making positive and effective use of free time and facilitating stress management and favorable peer affiliations.
Character Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Personal Character - Personal Responsibility 	Maintains a sense of accountability to self and others through attention to the potential impact (short and long term) of actions. Seeks to engage in behaviors which reflect pro-social values thus creating a positive impact in their life and the lives of others. Displays a healthy tolerance for delayed gratification. Displays the capacity for self-reflection and consideration of meaning in life in relation to a particular faith or personal philosophy.

FEDERAL POST-CONVICTION RISK ASSESSMENT (PCRA)

PCRA is an evidence-based instrument developed by the Administrative Office of the United States Courts to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of post-conviction supervision. Evidence-based refers to the conscientious use of the best evidence currently available to inform decisions about the supervision of individuals, as well as the design and delivery of policies and practices, to achieve the maximum, measurable reduction in recidivism.

A critical component of evidence-based practices is the use of an actuarial risk and needs assessment tool to identify: (1) which persons to target for correctional interventions (**RISK**); (2) what characteristics or needs to address (**NEED**), and (3) how to deliver supervision and treatment in a way that optimizes positive outcomes (**RESPONSIVITY**).

According to the *risk* principle, the level of correctional intervention should match the client's risk of recidivism. Higher-risk persons require more intensive services in order to reduce reoffending, while lower-risk persons need less intervention. The risk level is determined by the presence or absence of criminogenic factors, which are personal characteristics and circumstances statistically associated with an increased chance of recidivism

Under the *need* principle, correctional interventions should target known and changeable predictors of recidivism (also referred to as "criminogenic needs"). These are factors that, when changed, are associated with changes in the probability of recidivism. Research indicates that there are eight criminogenic needs which contribute to an individual's risk of recidivating: (1) anti-social attitudes; (2) anti-social beliefs; (3) anti-social friends and peers; (4) anti-social personality patterns; (5) high-conflict family and intimate relationships; (6) substance abuse; (7) low levels of achievement in school and/or work; and (8) unstructured and anti-social leisure time. Risk assessments help identify a person's greatest criminogenic needs, so that that the appropriate services can be provided to that individual.

An effective reentry strategy does not ignore other general reentry needs (such as getting participants clothing, a driver's license, a place to live, etc.). But it may use referrals and focus fewer resources to meet those needs. It structures services and supports so that these services attend first to participants' key criminogenic needs.

Finally, *responsivity* factors are easiest to think of as barriers to treatment. They don't put a person at increased risk; however, they might limit the offender's ability to engage in treatment. Addressing responsivity factors will maximize supervision and treatment efforts. Characteristics such as intelligence, levels of anxiety, or mental health disorders may affect an offender's learning styles, leading her or him to respond more readily to some techniques than to others. Responsivity factors may be relevant, not because they predict criminal conduct, but because they affect how supervision and treatment services are delivered and matched to clients to produce the best outcome.

CONTENT OF THE FEDERAL POST-CONVICTION RISK ASSESSMENT

PCRA has been demonstrated to be a statistically significant predictor of recidivism, and contribute to the conclusion regarding risk level and criminogenic needs. PCRA measures four major and three minor dynamic risk factors.

Major dynamic risk factors:

- (1) Cognitions: Thinking drives behavior – the way we think and believe is related to the way we act. Examples of thinking styles that increase offender risk are making excuses, ignoring responsible actions, a sense of being above the law, asserting power over others, self-serving acts of kindness, getting away with anything, lazy thinking, and getting sidetracked.
- (2) Social networks: (a) Peers – who we associate with can impact what we do. Peers influence our thoughts, beliefs and behaviors. Peers provide immediate reinforcement and punishment for our behavior. (b) Family – family can impact what we think and do. Family can support, or disapprove of criminal and/or pro-social behavior.
- (3) Education and employment: Lack of education and/or employment can lead to lower financial means, leading to exposure to high crime neighborhoods or attempts to increase finances by illegal means. Being employed or in school can be pro-social activities that occupy time. Employment and/or educational opportunities can also expose a person to pro-social others. Employment and/or educational opportunities provide reinforcement for pro-social activities.
- (4) Drugs and alcohol: Buying, selling, and using illegal drugs represents an illegal activity and exposes a person to antisocial others. Illegal drug activity usually creates an environment conducive to other criminal behavior. Excessive alcohol consumption and/or drug use can facilitate involvement in criminal behavior.

Minor dynamic risk factors:

- (1) Leisure time: No regular involvement in pro-social activities and/or a group or pro-social friends. Having pro-social activities or friends tend to constrain exposure to and involvement in criminal activities.
- (2) Home environment: Lack of a stable home residence may contribute to decreased opportunity to form positive normative ties and attachments. A lack of a stable residence may interfere with the ability to establish pro-social supports. A stable residence provides personal rewards and reflects participation in societal norms.
- (3) Finances: Financial problems are considered stressors and may be precipitators of inappropriate ways to get money. Financial problems may be indicative of anti-social attitudes. Financial stability and self-sufficiency are pro-social.



RELAPSE PREVENTION PLAN

A relapse prevention plan (aka behavioral analysis) is a process by which the offender identifies the circumstances of his or her offending behavior for the last 10 times he or she was in trouble or could have been in trouble if caught. Ultimately, the purpose of the relapse prevention plan is to allow the officer and the offender to identify high-risk people, places, things, and thoughts (situations) that increase the offender's risk of getting into trouble. These high-risk people, places, and things should then become the focus of the officer-offender and offender-mentor interactions. Mentors and officer should try to get the offender to avoid these high-risk people, places, and things; if this is not possible, the offender should be taught to cope with the high-risk people, places, and things. Ultimately, over the course of supervision, the offender should be taught the skills he or she needs to either a) avoid the situation or b) cope with the situation.

Recognize, Avoid, Cope, Evaluate

An integral part of the relapse prevention curriculum is the concept of RACE (Recognize, Avoid, Cope, Evaluate). RACE is based on the relapse prevention literature and uses behavioral analysis as a guide to uncover high-risk people, places, and things. RACE seeks to assist the offender in knowing how to respond to those high-risk influences to avoid getting into trouble. It is important to understand that high-risk situations do not cause a person to engage in anti-social behavior. Instead these are situations that typically elicit high-risk thoughts and feelings that can lead to criminal behavior. Whatever high-risk influences the offender encounters, the RACE steps can be used to help the offender make responsible choices. The concepts of RACE are defined as follows:

1. **Recognize** high-risk influences that tempt the offender to engage in criminal behavior. These can be situations, such as people, places or things, or inaccurate perceptions, high-risk thoughts or feelings, and high-risk behaviors. An offender's first opportunity to choose responsible behavior rests in his or her ability to recognize his or her high-risk situations.

2. **Avoid** high-risk influences whenever possible by taking steps to stay away from situations that typically lead the offender into irresponsible choices. The best way to prevent high-risk influences from leading to irresponsible behavior is to avoid the situations in the first place. Some planning and skill development (e.g., refusal skills to be used with pro-criminal peers) might be needed before the offender can avoid high-risk situations.

3. **Cope** with high-risk influences responsibly. In situations where the high-risk influencer cannot be avoided, problem-solving techniques and other skills aid the offender in handling the situation responsibly.

4. **Evaluate** your progress after each encounter in which Recognize, Avoid, and Cope were used to determine if the skills produced responsible choices and responses to high-risk situations. The offender should praise him or herself for good choices that led to positive outcomes. If the offender is not satisfied with the outcomes, he or she should either refine the skills used or change strategies so that more adaptive outcomes will occur in the future.

Developing a relapse prevention plan will help the mentee develop a roadmap which can increase their chances of reaching their desired goals. The prevention plan template will help the mentee put their personal prevention plan on paper. When their goals are merely inside their head managing any resistance to change is difficult if not impossible. But once they are on paper, the mentees are on the way to turning dreams into reality.

Offenders are asked to complete the following form to help them keep track of situations (people, places, things) that increase their risk of getting into trouble. They list the situations that they have recognized as being high-risk for themselves and how they plan to avoid them. If they can't avoid them, they describe how they will cope with them. Finally, they describe how their avoidance and coping strategies have worked if they have tried them out. They are asked to think of ways they can improve their avoidance and coping skills each time they try one. They also use self-reinforcement when they avoid or cope successfully!

Recognize	Avoid Can you avoid? Plan to avoid	Cope If you cannot avoid, plan to manage	Evaluate If Used How can you better handle the scenario? What did you do well?

V. THE MENTOR COMPONENT WITH THE PROGRAM

As previously stated, a mentoring relationship can assist ex-offenders in successfully and permanently reentering their communities by providing consistent support as needed, guidance, and encouragement that impacts the ex-offenders in developing positive social relationships and achieving program outcomes such as job retention, family reunification, reduced recidivism, etc. The following represents areas of the program to consider when adding/using a mentor component:

- Stakeholders
- Program Overview and Mission
- Keeping Mentees Engaged in Mentoring Activities
- Mentor/Mentee Meeting Cards
- Mentor Code of Conduct
- Mentor Participation Agreement
- Post-Conviction Supervision
- Position Description

STAKEHOLDERS

Stakeholders for a reentry program may include a judge, probation officer, a prosecutor, and a defense attorney, together with various community resource professionals in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, and vocational rehabilitation. All stakeholders commit to participating in an intensive supervision program designed to help offenders in the federal system successfully transition from incarceration to society.



PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND MISSION

Reentry refers to a period of transition between a person's release from prison and his or her reintegration back into the community. Research has shown that when people are released from prison, their job prospects are dim, their chances of finding a place to live are bleak, and their health is poor. Fewer than half have a job lined up before leaving prison. Three-fourths still have a substance abuse problem and one-third have a physical or mental disability. Within three years, two-thirds will be rearrested, and nearly half returned to prison for a new crime or parole violation. In response, criminal justice officials who are interested in greater public safety and more efficient use of tax dollars are focusing on reentry as an issue that affects public safety, economic revitalization, and

the well-being of families and neighborhoods. There are a variety of reentry preparation programs and initiatives in the criminal justice system, including pre-release, drug rehabilitation, vocational training, and work programs, many of which started in the state system, but all of which are designed to assist ex-offenders in acquiring life skills they need to successfully reintegrate into the community and become law-abiding citizens.

The Northern District of Florida, U.S. District Court Reentry Program is incorporating a mentoring component as an evidence-based approach to facilitate successful reentry for federal offenders released from prison. The Reentry Program is being evaluated as part of a long-term research study being conducted by the School of Justice Studies and Social Work at the University of West Florida. Eligible former offenders are randomly selected into one of two groups. The first group will: (1) be assigned to a STARR-trained U.S. Probation Officer; (2) participate in cognitive behavioral therapy; and (3) be matched with a mentor. The second group will: (1) be assigned to a STARR-trained U.S. Probation Officer; (2) participate in cognitive behavioral therapy; (3) be matched with a mentor; and (4) participate in reentry court sessions.

KEEPING MENTEES ENGAGED IN MENTORING ACTIVITIES:

- Discuss topics that mentees suggest or ask mentees to create the topics/agenda
- Provide opportunities for outside activities (i.e., eating at restaurants, going to sporting events
- Bring in guest speakers
- Encourage mentors to socially interact with mentees one-on-one before and after meetings, and over the phone in between meetings.
- **Logs/Monitoring Mentoring Sessions: Fill out “logs” following each group and/or one-on-one mentoring session. These logs typically contain:**
 - Name(s) of the mentor(s) and mentee(s) present and absent
 - Activities engaged in and whether the mentor thought they were successful
 - Positive and/or negative changes observed in the mentee
 - Any problems or disruptions in the session
 - Suggestions for future activities or improvements in the program
 - Whether the coordinator should contact the mentor

Keep in mind, mentoring activities should be specifically addressed by the program itself and may include group or one-on-one mentoring activities or a combination of both.



POSITION DESCRIPTION: VOLUNTEER MENTOR

Position Title: Mentor

Responsibilities/Duties

- Develop and maintain a meaningful relationship with one or more program participants that assists in successful community transition.
- Participate in mentor orientation and attend other scheduled training sessions.
- Abide by all guidelines set forth by the program and organization.
- Provide regular updates to Mentor Coordinator.

Minimum Qualifications

- High school diploma required, college degree recommended.
- Relatively successful in life and career (e.g., able to offer guidance to newly released ex-offenders).
- Effective communication skills.
- Realistic expectations of mentee's receptiveness and cooperation.
- Respectful of mentee's religious beliefs and cultural sensitivities.
- Willing to spend time alone with an adult, same-sex offenders convicted of a federal crime.
- Genuine desire to help ex-offenders maintain a stable, crime-free lifestyle.
- Ability to adapt to constructive criticism.
- Demonstrated level of responsibility with family, employment, and community.

*"Volunteering can be an
exciting, growing, enjoyable
experience. It is truly
gratifying to serve a cause,
practice one's ideals, work
with people, solve problems,
see benefits, and know one
had a hand in them."
- Harriet Naylor*

MENTOR PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT
(clarifies and details mentor responsibilities)

For the Northern District of Florida Reentry Program, the mentor time commitment is 18-months.

As a mentor in the Northern District of Florida Reentry Program, I agree to:

1. Never use drugs or alcohol when you are with the mentee.
2. Never offer the mentee drugs or alcohol.
3. Do not take the mentee to your home or place of work.
4. Do not allow the mentee to borrow your vehicle. You may transport the mentee in your vehicle, providing you maintain liability insurance on your vehicle and the transport is in support of the mentor/mentee relationship.
5. Respect the privacy and personal boundaries of the mentee.
6. If you are running late for a scheduled meeting with the mentee, call the mentee to let him/her know what time you will be there.
7. Never ask your mentee to keep a secret. Make sure you advise the mentee that you cannot keep any secrets that may endanger his/her life or that of somebody else.
8. Advise the mentee, you will report any and all illegal activity of the mentee.
9. Do not give the mentee money.
10. Do not show partiality towards, or become emotionally, physically, sexually, or financially involved with the mentee.
11. Do not accept gifts, personal service, or favors from the mentee.
12. Avoid situations which give rise to a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.
13. Do not possess, carry, or use a firearm or dangerous weapon when meeting with the mentee.
14. Do not curse or use bad language.
15. Do not make degrading, sexist, or racist comments.
16. Be mindful of self-disclosure and how much detail regarding you and your family you wish to provide to the mentee. Is there a need for the mentee to know?
17. Mentors should not share the mentee's confidential information with anyone. There are only a few exceptions to the confidentiality rule.
 - If the mentee's life is in danger
 - If the mentee is going to harm themselves or another person
 - When talking to program staff to check in and keep track of the mentoring relationship

I agree to abide by the Northern District of Florida Reentry Program Mentor Code of Conduct and Mentor Participation Agreement:

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name of Mentor: _____

POST CONVICTION SUPERVISION

Mentors working with ex-offenders have community resources available. Also, most of the ex-offenders the mentees are working with in the program will be under supervision with a United States Probation Officer. In an effort to assist the mentor to understand some of the guidelines the mentee must follow while on supervision, a listing of the standard conditions of supervision is provided.

The U.S. Probation Office provides supervision of those persons convicted of federal crimes. Through its officers and other employees, the system works to make the criminal justice process effective and the public safe. They direct persons under supervision to help them stay on the right side of the law. In the federal courts, supervision is:

- A way to monitor the activities and behavior of people released to the community;
- An opportunity to help offenders reintegrate into the community following a period of incarceration;
- In the case of probation, a punishment that is less severe than imprisonment, but still holds people accountable for breaking the law;
- In some cases, an alternative to jail or prison that costs less than incarceration and gives people convicted of federal crimes the opportunity to live with their families, hold jobs, and be productive members of society.

Supervision addresses several key criminal justice goals. Through supervision, officers:

- Enforce the court's order. Officers make sure people on supervision comply with the conditions the court has set for their release to the community (see standard release conditions below);
- Protect the community. Officers reduce the risk that people on supervision commit crimes;
- Provide treatment and assistance. Officers help people in supervision correct problems that may be linked to their criminal behavior by directing them to services to help them. These services may include substance abuse or mental health treatment, medical care, training, or employment assistance.

In working with people on supervision, officers:

- Inform them of what the court expects of them;
- Meet with them at home and at work;
- Monitor their compliance with the conditions the court has set for their release;
- Step in to control and correct, should their person not comply.

Release conditions are rules set by the court that people on supervision must follow if they want to remain in the community. The court imposes the release conditions to help structure the person's actions and activities. For example, standard release conditions are:

- The defendant shall not leave the judicial district without the permission of the Court or probation officer;
- The defendant shall report to the probation officer as directed by the Court or probation officer, and shall submit a truthful and complete written report within the first five days of each month;
- The defendant shall answer truthfully all inquiries by the probation officer and follow the instructions of the probation officer;
- The defendant shall support his or her dependents and meet other family responsibilities;
- The defendant shall work regularly at a lawful occupation, unless excused by the probation officer for schooling, training, or other acceptable reasons;
- The defendant shall notify the probation officer at least ten (10) days prior to any change of residence or employment;
- The defendant shall refrain from excessive use of alcohol and shall not purchase, possess, use, distribute, or administer any controlled substance, or any paraphernalia related to such substances, except as prescribed by a physician;
- The defendant shall not frequent places where controlled substances are illegally sold, used, distributed, or administered;
- The defendant shall not associate with any persons engaged in criminal activity, and shall not associate with any person convicted of a felony unless granted permission to do so by the probation officer;
- The defendant shall permit a probation officer to visit at any time at home or elsewhere and shall permit confiscation of any contraband observed in plain view by the probation officer;
- The defendant shall notify the probation officer within seventy-two hours of being arrested or questioned by a law enforcement officer;
- The defendant shall not enter into any agreement to act as an informer or a special agent of a law enforcement agency without the permission of the Court;
- As directed by the probation officer, the defendant shall notify third parties of risks that may be occasioned by the defendant's criminal record or personal history or characteristics, and shall permit the probation officer to make such notifications and confirm the defendant's compliance with such notification requirement; and
- If the Judgment imposes a fine or a restitution obligation, it shall be a condition of probation that the defendant pay any such fine or restitution that remains unpaid at the commencement of the term of supervision in accordance with any schedule of payments set forth in the Criminal Monetary Penalties sheet of the judgment. In any case, the defendant should cooperate with the probation officer in meeting any financial obligations.

“We exist temporarily through what
we take,
but we live forever
through what
we give.”

Douglas M. Lawson



CONCLUSION

From the earliest days of our nation's history, the spirit of volunteerism has been reflected in neighbors helping neighbors to overcome obstacles in the pursuit of happiness. For millions of Americans, volunteering is the key to healthy, fulfilling and meaningful lives. For ex-offenders, volunteers offer the opportunity to experience healthy social behaviors and mentoring relationships. Volunteering is necessary for the health of our society, and it bridges the gap between ex-offenders and the community.

Thank you for your commitment as a Mentor Volunteer. You are viewed as playing an integral part in helping ex-offenders transition back into your community. This Mentor Handbook is intended to serve as a guide to the many aspects of mentoring and will in all likelihood not address every situation you may face or answer all of your questions. Your feedback is welcome as we continue to enhance this initial draft of the Mentor Handbook to ensure it meets the needs of Mentor Volunteers such as yourself.

There is an evaluation form in the back of the Mentor Handbook and we encourage you to take time to complete it and return it at the time of the training or to the address listed below. Keep in mind you may have additional feedback and comments well after the training and as you progress through the mentoring component of the program. Do not hesitate to send those additional comments to further enhance future mentor training.

Please send comments to:

Myra Lowery
Reentry Affairs Administrator
Federal Bureau of Prisons
Southeast Regional Office
3800 Camp Creek Parkway, SW
Building 2000
Atlanta, GA 30331
e-mail: melowery@bop.gov





RESOURCES:

Volunteer Mentor Handbook, Central MN Re-Entry Project; www.cmnrp.org

Mentoring 101, John C. Maxwell

Building Offenders' Community Assets through Mentoring 2009, Author: Rachelle Giguere, center for Effective Public Policy. Developed for the FY 2007 Prisoner Reentry Initiative Grant program, sponsored by the U. S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance and administered by the Center for Effective Public Policy

Mentor Training Manual developed by the New Mornings Reentry Services in Pennsylvania

Designing and Customizing Mentor Training June 2004, Written by Elsy Arevalo with contributions by DeVone Boggan and Lynne West, Produced and Conducted by the Center for Applied Research Solutions, Inc. for the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs

<http://www.positive-thinking-principles.com/action-plan-template.html>

Ready 4Reentry Prisoner Reentry Toolkit for Faith-Based and Community Organizations, United States Department of Labor, Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives

The Elected Official's Toolkit for Jail Reentry, U. S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Jesse Jannetta, Hannah Dodd, and Brain Elderbroom

Bureau of Prisons' Program Statement 3420.09, Standards of Employee Conduct, dated 02-05-1999.

Mentoring Former Prisoners, A Guide for Reentry Programs, Renata Cobbs, Fletcher and Jerry Sherk with Linda Jucovy, Public/Private Ventures, November 2009

Bureau of Prisons Interpersonal Skills Training Modules, Unit Counselor Training Series (Motivational Interviewing)

News and Views, A Biweekly Newsletter of the United States Probation and Pretrial Services, Vol. XXXVI, No. 20, September 26, 2011

Offender Employment Specialist – Building Bridges curriculum, National Institute of Corrections