

Job Aid: Best Practices for Effective Mentoring Relationships

Although every mentoring relationship is different, there are some best practices that can help ensure success. Understanding the importance of these best practices and implementing them correctly can increase the effectiveness of your mentoring program.

Best Practice	Importance	Tips for Implementation
Determine the mentee’s career development needs	Identifying the mentee’s needs at the start gives the mentoring relationship a strong, realistic goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflect on strengths, weaknesses, goals• Identify and document priority areas for improvement• Reflect on the mentor’s progress to provide a model• Select methods to fill skill gaps• Network with people within the organization who can help them
Define the structure of the mentoring	Being intentional about how the mentoring will work helps both parties know what to expect and keep their commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clarify roles of mentor and mentee• Avoid assumptions by laying out all expectations• Apply ground rules about communication, response times, schedules• Establish confidentiality
Plan methods to push mentees to learn for themselves	As the mentee grows into their position, the role of the mentor shifts to providing background support, rather than direct assistance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask different types of questions to provoke broad responses• Use hypothetical case studies so mentees can apply their learning• Encourage mentees to seek solutions themselves• Offer sources of inquiry, not specific solutions• Give assignments for mentees to take risks and experiment with new ideas