

LEAD MENTORING PROGRAM

LEADERSHIP EXCELLENCE, ACHIEVEMENT, AND DEVELOPMENT

Ground Rules and Confidentiality

Three aspects of accountability are critical for building and maintaining the relationship: ground rules, confidentiality safeguards, and boundary setting.

Ground Rules for the Relationship. Ground rules are the norms and guidelines that mentoring partners agree to abide by. They should not restrict the relationship, but rather encourage and support accountability. The following mentoring norms can be used to start the discussion on ground rules:

- Our meetings begin and end on time
- Each of us actively participates in the relationship
- Our communication is open, candid and direct
- We will respect our differences and learn from them
- We will honor each other's expertise and experience
- We will safeguard confidentiality
- We will manage our time well
- We will put interruptions aside

Checking in to determine whether the ground rules are working effectively at the beginning or end of the first several mentoring sessions helps smooth the way and avoid difficulties later on.

Checklist for Assumption Testing About Confidentiality

Answer each question with a "yes", "no", or "not sure". Complete a copy yourself and ask your mentee to complete a copy. Review and discuss each item with your mentee. Allow for a full discussion of gaps before coming to consensus.

Which of the following assumptions about confidentiality do you hold?

- ___ 1. What we discuss stays between us for as long as we are engaged in our mentoring relationship.
- ___ 2. After our formal mentoring relationship has ended, it is okay to talk about what we discussed or how we related?
- ___ 3. What we say between us stays there unless you give me permission to talk about it with others.
- ___ 4. Some issues will be kept confidential, while others will not.
- ___ 5. It is okay to discuss how we relate to one another but not the content of our discussions.
- ___ 6. It is okay to talk about what we talk about as long as it is positive.

Are there other assumptions I hold that should be added to this list?

*Adapted from Lois J. Zachary, **The Mentor's Guide: Facilitating Effective Learning Relationships***