



Mentor Guide

Program Description & Recommended Best Practices

Mission of the Mentor Guide

The mission of a Mentor Guide is to offer each of the community's caring volunteer mentors, those still new to the MentorCONNECT community as well as those recently transitioned from Mentee to mentor level, additional support and guidance beyond what is outlined in the Mentor Orientation & Training Packet.

Definition of a "Mentor Guide"

By definition, a "guide" is someone who accompanies another for protection; one who serves as a model for others, as in determining a course of action.

The Mentor Guide is a critical leadership position. The main priority is to support the central mission and vision of MentorCONNECT by fostering foundational, sustainable, mentoring teams.

Requirements

In this supportive leadership role, we have found that the following demonstrated experience and skills can lead to greater success as a Mentor Guide.

- Have at least 2 years experience (24 consecutive months) as a MentorCONNECT mentor or the equivalent through other complementary programs (NEDA, ANAD, 12-Step communities, etc.)
- Consistently positive (8-10 rating range) ratings from mentees on mentee surveys
- Highly responsive via email (and phone if applicable)
- Demonstrates strong knowledge of and commitment to MentorCONNECT mission, vision and participation guidelines

Preparation

- Based on established mentoring experience, preparation for the role is already in place
- Mentor Guides serve in a team-based environment with ongoing individual and bi-monthly group peer-to-peer support sessions. Each Mentor Guide is encouraged to utilize both outlets for reinforcement and brainstorming

Reporting – Mentor Guide Group Coordinator

The Mentor Guide reports to the Mentor Guide Group Coordinator, Alison Smela (alison@mentorconnect-ed.org)

Reporting requirements and schedule TBD as the group evolves.

Role of the Mentor Guide Group Coordinator:

- Act as point person for newly assigned mentors who have yet to be matched with a mentee
- Oversee quarterly mentor survey requirement (see Mentor Guide Administrative Duties)
- Oversee, schedule and host bi-monthly Mentor Guide Teleconferences (these Teleconferences are presented privately for active Mentor Guides only)
- Ensure Mentor Guides are apprised of and adhering to ongoing and changing MentorCONNECT service and community guidelines



Mentor Guide Match Assignments

- All mentors will be assigned a Mentor Guide once the first mentee match has been secured
- At present, the number of Mentor Guides is limited. As such, a maximum of 10 or less mentors will be assigned to each Mentor Guide

A Mentor Guide Is Responsible For:

- Supporting each incoming and active mentor in their service within the MentorCONNECT community
- Offering suggestions based on practical, not theoretical, experience to assist each incoming and active mentor in building foundational relationships with their mentees
- Offering encouragement with the specific intention of bolstering confidence for all incoming and active mentors
- Serving as role model for incoming and active mentors as they grow toward achieving Mentor Guide level
- Providing incoming and active mentors with enough autonomy to make decisions about mentee issues utilizing their own practical experience (NOTE: This is an opportunity for the Mentor Guide to encourage the philosophy of “learn by doing” rather than through “do what you’re told”)

A Mentor Guide Is Not Responsible For:

- **Acting as a therapist or counselor.** The only suggestions, insight or recovery knowledge Mentor Guides are asked to provide to their assigned mentors will be that which is based on the Mentor Guide’s own practical experience with recovery and mentoring, rather than that which may be based on clinical, educational or mentoring theory or even best practices. (NOTE: This aspect of the Mentor Guide’s role may present as particularly challenging for Guides who are licensed treatment professionals. As such, all incoming Guides must ensure they feel confident and comfortable serving within a non-medical, non-clinical and non-theoretical framework before taking on this role)
- **Micromanaging.** Mentor Guides are neither expected nor invited to monitor the day-to-day evolution of mentor-mentee partnerships. Rather, the Guide is asked to simply make themselves available to each assigned mentor for brainstorming, troubleshooting and support as well as ongoing recovery education as needed.
- **Making initial contact.** All Mentor Guides will be asked to reach out and make the initial welcome contact with each newly assigned mentor. After that introductory effort, Mentor Guides then take on more of a supportive, non-directive role requiring the mentors to take on accountability for ongoing communications. (NOTE: Exceptions are non-responsiveness, administrative duties, and/or issues brought to the Mentor Guide’s attention directly from mentees (by way of surveys, direct contact with Leadership Team, etc.)
- **Acting as a “fix-it” resource.** Rather than simply providing a ready solution to questions, issues or challenges their mentors may come up against, the Mentor Guide serves more or less as a sounding board, allowing a mentor the bandwidth to problem-solve based on their own practical experience to field their mentee issues or challenges. As such, Mentor Guides are to encourage mentors to refer to what they themselves have done to work through recover challenges in order to generate foundational, sustainable solutions for their mentees. The intention is to allow mentors the opportunity to troubleshoot from the inside out, thus strengthening self-confidence reaching beyond just their mentoring skills.



Mentor Guide Administrative Duties

The overall responsibility of a Mentor Guide is to be supportive in nature rather than administrative, a small amount of organizational and administrative work is required to assist in the execution of the quarterly mentor surveys. MentorCONNECT conducts these quarterly mentoring team surveys to gather information critical for program monitoring and adjustments where needed. All active mentoring team members (mentors, mentees) will receive a survey once per quarter. Mentor Guides will send the surveys to their assigned mentors and monitor incoming responses as part of the quarterly survey process.

Specifically each Mentor Guide will receive an alert from the MentorCONNECT database coordinator with the information to properly distribute surveys to their assigned mentors.

Suggested Topics Mentor Guides Can Discuss with Mentors

In addition to required duties and support as needed/requested, the Mentor Guide represents a source of useful mentoring experience and continuing education for incoming and active mentors. These topics can be especially useful to incoming and active mentors as they develop their mentoring confidence and skills.

- Personal healthy recovery comes first ... always
- Boundaries
- Emergency situations
- Sharing of one's story – how much is too much; how much is enough
- Balance between personal life and being of service to others
- Letting go of outcomes – whether or not mentees take suggestions is their choice
- Not responsible for mentee slipping or succeeding – this is not an ego-driven effort
- How to handle mentee “slips” or relapses
- Consistency in tone and message
- What to do if you are in relapse

Suggested Solutions for Possible Mentor Issues

(To Note: This document is for general direction only. MentorCONNECT respects the proven ability of each Mentor Guide to identify, reflect upon and create healthy, recovery-based suggested solutions that are best suited for each individual situation.)

- **Mentor is Non-Responsive.**
 - Two attempts should be made to contact a non-responsive mentor before the alerting the Mentor Guide Program Facilitator, who will then make two additional communication attempts
 - At the same time, the Mentor Guide will be assigned another mentor to replace the mentor who is nonresponsive
 - The Mentor Guide Program Facilitator will then make two additional communication attempts
 - If the non-responsive mentor returns as active, she/he will be reassigned to a new Mentor Guide (For example, if there were issues between Mentor Guide and mentor, a different Mentor Guide match may provide a better “fit.”)
 - If the non-response mentor continues to be absent, she/he will be officially identified as inactive and his/her respective mentees notified and offered the option to match with a new mentor



Suggested Solutions for Possible Mentor Issues (*Continued*)

- **Mentor Resists Suggestion**
 - Mentor will be reminded that the Mentor Guide's role is simply to offer another source of additional support as the mentor serves their mentees. If a mentor chooses an action contrary to suggestions made by the Mentor Guide, this is to be respected (so long as the mentor's chosen action does not seem in conflict with their mentee's wellbeing.) However, this also presents a great opportunity to conduct a healthy conversation between Guide and mentor about why there is resistance and whether there is willingness to consider the Guide's ideas should the mentor's own strategy fail to bring about successful resolution of the match issue
- **Reported Ongoing, Unresolved Mentee Issues**
 - When mentor or mentee reports an ongoing, unresolved mentee issue, the Guide and mentor are invited to work together to craft a mutually agreeable action plan (which may also include dialogue between all three parties – Guide, mentor, mentee – where indicated). In these situations, the Mentor Guide is invited to use their practical mentoring experience as a resource the mentor can draw upon as Guide and mentor are determining the best course of action together
 - After instituting the action plan, the mentor will be asked to provide regular updates (as determined by Guide and mentor) towards a successful resolution of the mentee's reported issue

Mentor Guide-Assigned Mentor Introductions

As an experienced mentor, Mentor Guides are encouraged to design a connection uniquely tailored to each assigned mentor's personality and support needs. As with any healthy relationship, the initial "getting to know you" stage is where lasting first impressions will be made. The Mentor Guide should feel encouraged – but not required – to make use of these introduction email templates when a new mentor is assigned.

(NOTE: The formal definition of a Mentor Guide provided in this packet is intended to serve as point of reference only – rather than as required protocol. As well, the manner in which each Mentor Guide chooses to establish a relationship with each of their assigned mentors will be supported so long as both Guide and mentor adhere to best practices set in place for the benefit of the MentorCONNECT community at large.)

A: Introductory Email (Mentees elevated to Mentor status)

Dear (insert name)

Congratulations on the healthy recovery you have achieved which enabled you to become a mentor within the MC family. Your hard work and commitment to healthy living is to be honored and for that, I salute you.

Everyone including me needs support no matter how long or how varied their recovery journey has been. Taking on this new role is no exception. This is why I have been assigned to serve as your Mentor Guide, willingly offering you my practical experience with mentoring if/when you encounter mentee issues or situations requiring a second set of eyes.

As I am sure you would agree, establishing available times for contact is much needed for healthy communication. Right now, the best times to get in touch with me are (insert time/dates best for you).

Please respond to this message with the same time/date information which adheres with your current schedule. Initially I'd like to review the current mentee matches you have and what, if any, questions or concerns you presently have.

I am honored to be walking the mentoring path with you, offering all the support you need along the way.



B: Introductory Email (Incoming Mentors new to the MC community)

Dear (new mentor's name):

Welcome to MentorCONNECT and thank you once again for making the decision to share your experience, strength and hope to our mentee members. The opportunity to mentor those who want what you have is not only significant for them, but as I've learned, profoundly valuable in maintaining our own good health.

I have been serving as a MentorCONNECT mentor (or Mentor Guide) for (insert total amount of time or a general mention) and have been assigned to serve as your Mentor Guide. By taking on this role, I willingly offer you my practical experience with mentoring if/when you encounter mentee issues or situations requiring a second set of eyes.

As I am sure you would agree, establishing available times for contact is much needed for healthy communication. Right now, the best times to get in touch with me are (insert time/dates best for you).

Please respond to this message with the same time/date information which adheres with your current schedule. Initially I'd like to review with you the current mentees you are working with and what, if any, questions or concerns you presently have.

I am honored to be walking the mentoring path with you, offering all the support you need along the way.

A Note of Gratitude and Welcome to You, the Mentor Guide

Congratulations – we are so excited to welcome you to the Mentor Guide program!

As an experienced mentor and now Mentor Guide, you have the opportunity to pass along wisdom and insight gained from your own recovery. This newly assigned level of MentorCONNECT mentoring service allows the incoming and active mentors further guidance as they continue serving their mentees toward the healthy recovery we all strive for.

In addition to the best practices contained in this document, we welcome you to brainstorm, collaborate and share ideas and experiences within our growing Mentor Guide Program family. At this level, we strongly believe in learning both as individuals and as a group and as such, we encourage you to access the support of your fellow Mentor Guides, the Mentor Guide Coordinator and other leaders within the MentorCONNECT community. Your efforts will be fully supported in every way possible.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and all those who serve the MC family, we thank you for generously offering your personal time as a Mentor Guide providing a great service to the MentorCONNECT community. Your personal recovery experience will be invaluable in paving the way for those who will one day stand where you are now.

Additional Support

MentorCONNECT is a team-based community and as such, all those serving as volunteer leaders are considered players on the same team. Therefore regardless of role title, we all possess insight and experience which may benefit another. If you need help, support or assistance with trouble-shooting at any time, don't hesitate to seek out another MC leader.