



COUNTY OF YOLO

Creating Your Own Department Mentoring Program

Program Outline

Department Mentoring Programs are designed to:

- Provide an environment that promotes professional learning and growth.
- Pair together a mentor who enjoys assisting others with their professional development with a mentee seeking guidance and insight.
- Provide clear guidelines on how to establish a mentoring relationship and outline specific relationship expectations.
- Provide the mentor with the opportunity to enhance their interpersonal and problem solving skills.
- Provide the mentee with needed guidance and career development.
- Support and build increased organizational success.
- Assist with succession planning by identifying and preparing suitable employees for advancement.

The mentor-mentee relationship can take a variety of forms. A mentor may provide career guidance, increase job knowledge, enhance skill sets, facilitate personal development, offer suggestions on work related issues, provide feedback on the mentee's work, assist with educational objectives, or work with the mentee in other ways agreed upon by both parties. A mentoring relationship does not have a formal evaluation component and will not result in any documentation to file.

Participation is voluntary and open to all departments who are willing to manage and administer their own Mentoring Program. This Program does not discourage county employees from forming less formal relationships for similar purposes. It also does not require existing relationships to be formalized.

Committing a Program Coordinator

The County recommends that the Department commit a program coordinator.

The role of the coordinator involves:

- Implementing the goals and objectives of the program
- Marketing the program
- Recruiting mentors and mentees
- Matching mentors and mentees, within and outside of the department
- Developing an orientation process
- Resolving any problems or conflicts while maintaining proper confidentiality

While the coordinator serves as a resource to assist and support mentoring relationships, the coordinator does not otherwise monitor or evaluate progress. The County anticipates that the coordinator dedicate a few hours per week to the program.

Mentors

A mentor assists the career and development of another. A mentor often possesses a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience that are beneficial to others in the county workforce and is willing to share this wealth. He or she helps clarify career goals for the mentee, and helps develop a plan for the mentee to reach those goals by sharing the insights and knowledge gained through his or her own experience. The role of mentor can include teacher, motivator, counselor, guide, door opener, advisor, and role model. Mentors provide options as well as guidance. Mentors are expected to enhance their own abilities through self-initiated research, training, and study.

Those wishing to participate as a mentor should submit a Mentor Profile Questionnaire to the program coordinator.

- Upon acceptance, the program coordinator will provide each mentor with relevant training materials and their contact information will be made available to potential mentees on the Mentoring Program contact list.

Mentees

There are two kinds of mentees:

- An employee who is new and has a need for a more experienced employee to provide an orientation and pass on the organizational culture. Not only does this knowledge help the mentee succeed, but it also helps the mentee feel included in the organization.
- A more seasoned employee who is seeking the professional guidance needed to enhance an already successful career.

Employees interested in having a mentor should submit a Mentee Profile Questionnaire to the managing department. The department will help define goals, provide relevant training materials and offer the list of mentors for review. Every effort will be made to find a suitable mentor from the list of participants whose interests and experiences match what the mentee is looking for.

Establishing a Mentor/Mentee Relationship

There are some basic expectations for both parties that should be discussed and agreed upon before the mentoring relationship begins.

- What is the focus of the mentoring? Career guidance, skills and knowledge, personal development, etc.
- What is the intended result? Enhanced learning and growth, increased job satisfaction, improved efficiency and effectiveness, etc.
- How frequently will you meet?
- How much time will be required?
- How will you measure progress on both the mentee's goals and the partnership itself?
- How long will the relationship last? For a defined period of time, for the duration of a specific case/project or as an on-going relationship?

Consider what you want out of the mentoring relationship and how it can best be structured to successfully achieve those results. The program provides an optional "Initial Mentoring Agreement" form, which can help outline goals and set boundaries.

Thoughts for Mentors

Before entering into a mentoring arrangement, mentors should consider:

- What is it that you would like to get out of a mentoring relationship?
- What strengths do you have, and what is the best way to pass on these skills to someone else?

- What experience do you have that will allow you to provide constructive advice and feedback?
- How much time can you commit to provide mentoring?
- What boundaries do you wish to set for the relationship?

A mentor should also remember that the mentee will ultimately make his or her own choices. If a mentee chooses a path or option that the mentor does not recommend or agree with, the mentor should not take it personally.

Thoughts for Mentees

Before entering into a mentoring agreement, mentees should consider:

- What aspects of your career or personal life are you hoping to improve via a mentoring relationship?
- Is a mentoring arrangement a suitable way to meet your goals?
- How much time and effort do you anticipate will be required?
- How much time and effort are you willing to put into the mentoring relationship?

Mentees should also remember that they, not the mentor, manage their own career and life choices. A mentor is there to help ask the right questions and guide one towards resources that will help the mentee make the best choices.

Elements of the Mentoring Relationship

- Level of commitment: Both individuals must have a realistic sense of the time commitment that each expects from the other. That commitment may need to be adjusted as the relationship develops, but both mentor and mentee must be willing to put in appropriate amounts of time and effort.
- Shared areas of interest: Each mentee's skills and experience levels will vary, as well as their interests and goals. The mentor should discuss areas of interest with the mentee before working with him or her.
- Balanced expectations: Discuss up front what each person hopes to gain from the relationship
- Mutually respectful relationship: Mentors and mentees must consider each other's viewpoints and communication styles. Honor the agreed upon time commitment, hours of contact, schedule/deadlines, etc. Mentoring is not a one-way street. Mentors and mentees should learn from each other.
- Open, two-way communication: Both mentor and mentee should be active partners in the relationship, and both should feel free to discuss the progress of the relationship
- A certain level of conflict: Each may have different ideas about how to approach a specific issue or task. Recognize that mistakes and conflicts are a part of learning.

What Not to Expect From Mentoring

The following are things you should not expect from mentoring:

- Do not expect smooth sailing throughout. Mentoring is a personal relationship. Both the mentor and the mentee will have individual goals and philosophies. If those goals and philosophies do not seem to mesh well, they should seek to resolve the differences. If unable to do so, they should seek assistance from the Mentoring Program Coordinator in the department, and feel free to look for another mentor or mentee.
- Do not expect immediate results. It takes time to develop a mentoring relationship. Getting to know a person is a gradual process. A mentee may be hesitant to bring up a specific issue and may need time to approach a mentor about it. Busy schedules may make regular contact difficult at times. Keep a positive attitude and keep communication open.
- A mentor should not expect a mentee to assume the mentor's responsibilities. Although it may be beneficial for a mentee to undertake some duties for a limited time in order to develop new knowledge or skills, it is inappropriate to turn over duties and responsibilities to a mentee simply to lighten one's workload.
- Mentees should not expect any preferential treatment from their participation.
- Although a mentoring relationship may be long term in duration, it should not be considered indefinite. Be prepared to recognize when the set goals and objectives have been met.

Confidentiality

In order to foster open and honest communication, the mentee must be able to trust the mentor not to disclose their discussions with others. However, if both agree that communication with the mentee's supervisor or other person would be beneficial, the mentor and the supervisor may talk. Examples of this include helping to identify developmental activities and prevent problems associated with differing needs, perspectives, and priorities. Discussions related to an intent to harm oneself or someone else or break a law can never be kept confidential.