

# Career Mentoring

## What is it?

Work-based mentoring links students with working adults to discuss career paths and options for the students' futures. Mentoring can take many different forms. For example, students and mentors may meet one-on-one or in groups, or correspond periodically via e-mail.

## Checklist for Success

\_\_\_\_\_ Employers should take time to understand the variety of mentoring programs available and determine which type best fits their needs (from intensive one-on-one to less time-intensive e-mentoring).

\_\_\_\_\_ Employers should consider how to make mentoring opportunities available for their employees, including potential incentives, recommended time on and off the job and what kind of resources are necessary for training.

\_\_\_\_\_ A mentor should be willing to dedicate a semester or full school year to mentoring a student.

\_\_\_\_\_ Schools should provide structure to ensure the goals of mentorship are being met for the student.

## Additional Resources:

- **Connecticut Learns**
  - [www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Career/WB/mentoring.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Career/WB/mentoring.pdf)
- **National Mentoring Partnership**
  - [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)
- **Mentoring Partnership of Southwest Pennsylvania**
  - [www.mentoringpittsburgh.org](http://www.mentoringpittsburgh.org)

# Career Mentoring, cont.

## Developing a Mentoring Program for your Organization<sup>6</sup>

### Strategies for Recruiting Workplace Mentors

How do managers recruit mentors from within the company? Various methods are described below.

- Managers solicit individual recommendations from department supervisors and existing workplace mentors;
- E-mail explaining mentoring is sent to all employees;
- Announcements appear in company newsletters and on bulletin boards; and
- Information on the company mentoring program is part of all new employees' orientation.

### Characteristics of an Effective Workplace Mentor

An effective workplace mentor is:

- willing and able to commit the necessary time to a student;
- interested in helping and teaching youth;
- able to communicate effectively with youth;
- able to see mentoring as an opportunity rather than an "assignment";
- sensitive to culturally diverse backgrounds;
- capable of encouraging, supporting, motivating and leading others; and
- willing to share constructive criticism and feedback in a supportive, sensitive and patient manner;
- contribute to the design, development and objectives of the student's individual internship or work-based learning plan;
- provide the student with an overview of the business, division functions and workplace rules, policies and procedures (including work-ethic issues, the organizational culture, unwritten rules and the social aspects of work);
- explain the organization's goals to the student and discuss how each division contributes to the achievement of goals;
- help the student understand his or her job responsibilities;
- help the student learn about other career opportunities within the organization and the student's chosen career cluster(s);
- assist the student in identifying and developing specific occupational, technical skills and the core academic and employability skills;
- help the student see connections between classroom learning and the workplace;
- point out the differences between school and work environments, including acceptable behavior and performance expectations;

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<sup>6</sup> Resource developed by Connecticut Learns ([www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Career/WB/mentoring.pdf](http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Career/WB/mentoring.pdf))

## Career Mentoring, cont.

- help build the student's self-esteem and confidence by providing opportunities for success in the workplace and positively reinforcing accomplishments;
- guide the student in work-related decision making, goal setting, prioritizing and scheduling;
- provide feedback necessary for the student to perform effectively, highlighting strengths and opportunities for growth and correcting inappropriate behavior;
- seek out the student's opinions and suggestions;
- formally or informally evaluate the student's work performance;
- coach the student to continuously improve work performance and encourage ongoing self-assessment;
- help the student to resolve conflicts, clarify issues and cope with stressful situations;
- make suggestions concerning appropriate work assignments, internship specifications, training and supervisory staff;
- act as a liaison between workplace and school staff, mediating when necessary and maintaining communication with school staff concerning student's progress (may share this responsibility with workplace managers);
- encourage the student to continue educational, personal and professional development;
- increase the student's awareness of career resources, networking opportunities and professional associations;
- model behaviors that lead to workplace success, including respectful communication and cooperation with colleagues; and evaluate self and student.

### Workplace Managers:

- solicit approval for involvement in school-to-career activities from their organization's top management;
- initiate actions to increase company-wide awareness and participation in school-to-career activities;
- help to recruit, select and train appropriate mentor volunteers from within the organization;
- define and clarify the roles and responsibilities of workplace mentors and students;
- include the mentor in individual internship or work plan design, objectives, and student selection criteria;
- help students evaluate their own performance and the attainment of goals;
- help students and mentors address concerns, propose solutions to problems (when necessary) and take action to resolve serious issues (as appropriate);
- act as a liaison between workplace and school staff, mediating when necessary and maintaining communication with school staff concerning student's progress (may share this responsibility with workplace mentors);
- offer support and suggestions for continuous improvement of the mentor student relationship;
- are sensitive to need for workplace mentors to spend time with students;
- identify ongoing needs of workplace mentors and students;
- evaluate students and employee-mentors.