



INTERN MENTORING GUIDE



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Introduction

Assigning a mentor to the agency's intern(s) is not required but is highly recommended.

Mentorship provides numerous benefits for the intern, the mentor, and the organization. Your role as a mentor will be to provide guidance, inspiration, support, and role modeling to be an invaluable resource throughout the internship. Strong mentors are typically good listeners who provide honest feedback, understand interns' strengths and weaknesses, and are committed to the intern's professional and personal growth. As a mentor, you will serve as a sounding board, provide coaching and support, and help the intern to acclimate quickly to your state office.

While some offices may choose to have the supervisor mentor the intern, others may assign a different individual to the role. This guide is intended to address mentoring separately from the supervisory responsibilities.

Types of Mentors

The role of the mentor can be fluid and ever-changing, depending on the needs of the intern. As a mentor, you may find yourself in multiple categories:

- **The Traditional Mentor** is typically a more senior individual who has relevant experience in the intern's field of study.
- **The Peer Mentor** is someone on the same hierarchical level, with similar work situations and issues.
- **The Aspirational Mentor** provides inspiration and may work at any level in or outside the organization.
- **The Practical Mentor** offers advice that is immediately applicable to real-world work or life situations.
- **The Coping Mentor** is a good listener and helps find ways to work through difficult situations.
- **The Identity Mentor** promotes understanding of the realities facing a group (gender, race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+, veterans, etc.).
- **The Informal Mentor** is not typically assigned to the intern but, rather, develops a guiding relationship on a more casual basis.
- **The Reverse Mentor** learns from the intern.

Benefits of Being a Mentor

Being a mentor can provide personal benefits, including:

- Improved communication skills
- Demonstration of leadership skills
- Enhanced network and connections
- Recognition as an advisor
- Increased self-reflection
- Exposure to different perspectives, ideas, and opinions
- Growth of self-confidence
- Forming of authentic relationships
- Fostering a community
- The opportunity to help others

Difference Between a Mentor and a Supervisor

A Supervisor:

- Has a professional role
- Mainly concerned with teaching
- Evaluation is a key role
- Exists during employment
- Is more structured; the intern is assigned formally

A Mentor:

- May have a professional or personal role
- Focused on conversation vs. instruction
- No evaluation
- Can extend beyond employment
- Is less structured, more informal

Qualities of the Mentor

A good mentoring relationship provides an intern with someone who will share their professional knowledge and expertise in the field and a good mentor is available to answer questions relevant to the intern's personal or professional development. This requires a genuine interest by both parties and a willingness to do what it takes to become successful as an intern.

A good mentor:

- Is willing to share skills, knowledge, and expertise.
- Demonstrates a positive attitude and acts as a positive role model.
- Takes a personal interest in the mentoring relationship and demonstrates respect for others.
- Exhibits enthusiasm in the field and in the mentor role.
- Values ongoing learning and growth in the field.
- Provides guidance and constructive feedback.
- Is respected by colleagues and employees in all levels of the organization.
- Sets and meets ongoing personal and professional goals.
- Appreciates diversity.
- Welcomes feedback.
- Values learning.
- Is a good listener.
- Can offer meaningful feedback.
- Is open to different ideas and perspectives.
- Maintains confidentiality.

How To Mentor

- **Plan ahead.** Think about what you want and how you want to approach the relationship – how much time to commit, ways to communicate and how you will know if it is successful.
- **Reflect on your experiences.** Think back to your own mentors – who inspired you and how.
- **Set expectations at the start.** Sit down with the intern and talk about what each of you expects and wants from the mentoring relationship.
- **Meet regularly.** A regular meeting schedule, in addition to spontaneous conversations, will engage the intern and build the relationship.
- **Get to know the intern.** Recognizing your differences and understanding the intern on a personal level can help you build a stronger relationship.
- **Share your own mistakes.** Admitting your own struggles builds trust and gives the intern permission to own up to their own mistakes.
- **Look for opportunities.** Share specific ways, such as projects or training, for the intern to get involved or learn desired skills.
- **Connect.** Introduce the intern to others in your network.
- **Celebrate achievements.** Recognize the work the intern has done.
- **Learn from the intern.** A new perspective may be of interest to you.

Communication Methods

Today's world offers multiple ways for mentors and interns to communicate. To begin the mentoring relationship, it can be helpful to discuss possible modes of communications with the intern, as well as the benefits and drawbacks for each. The frequency and mode of communication can then be agreed upon; mentors may choose to use multiple methods for staying connected with the intern.

- **Face to Face** is traditionally the most common method for communicating though it is not always possible, depending on the work environment. Face to face discussions can be prearranged, formally scheduled or chance meetings in the hallways.
- **Video Conferencing** can be a highly effective means of communication, especially when in-person interaction is not practical or possible.
- **Email** can be used in conjunction with other modes, particularly for sharing ideas or for seeking out information that might require further thought.
- **Texting** is very popular for quick notes or questions that require an immediate response. Not all interns will receive a state issued phone and some may choose to use their personal phone without reimbursement from the state. The use of a personal phone for business purposes is not required.
- **Telephone** can be used to have an interactive conversation when face to face or video conferencing is not feasible. As a reminder, state policy prohibits the use of the telephone while driving on state business.

Ways to Engage Interns

Effective mentors can engage interns in many ways. A mentor may:

- Help the intern learn about the department and its role in state government.
- Explain projects and processes.
- Offer insight on “the big picture.”
- Provide shadowing time for interns to observe how to manage time, people, and resources.
- Include interns in staff meetings and related professional activities when possible.
- Introduce interns to co-workers and key contacts within the department.
- Assist the intern in the transition to the workplace.
- Answer questions and concerns.
- Serve as a positive role model.
- Provide constructive feedback to the intern on a regular basis.
- Encourage the use of peer mentors.

Responsibilities of the Mentor

1. Be authentic.
2. Maintain regular contact with the intern; meet at scheduled times.
3. Be a good listener.
4. Be approachable and available.
5. Maintain confidentiality.
6. Provide constructive feedback; encourage two-way feedback.
7. Promote creativity and skill development.
8. Ask questions – support and praise when the situation merits.
9. Share your experiences and tell your story.
10. Talk about failures and successes – both are powerful lessons and provide learning opportunities.
11. Help the intern develop goals and access the resources needed to build a professional network.
12. Maintain a positive attitude.
13. Encourage independence, not dependence.
14. Provide guidance for career development.
15. Attend intern's final presentation, if applicable.

Responsibilities of the Intern

1. Appreciate the significance of the professional relationships you are building.
2. Take responsibility for learning.
3. Be respectful to your supervisor, coworkers, mentor, and leadership.
4. Listen, consider alternatives, and suggest solutions.
5. Maintain confidentiality.
6. Take initiative.
7. Accept feedback.
8. Be open to new ideas.
9. Maintain a positive attitude.
10. Be punctual.
11. Notify your supervisor or mentor of problems, concerns, or questions.
12. Recognize that goals can be accomplished in multiple ways.
13. Ask your mentor questions.
14. Complete all work assigned by your agency.
15. Communicate if you are requesting course credit and what the requirements from the supervisor should be.
16. Share your feedback at the conclusion as requested by your supervisor and by the Internship Program.

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