



## **Considerations for Mentoring During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

As more Vermonters are able to be vaccinated and restrictions are slowly lifted, MENTOR Vermont is here to assist youth mentoring programs as they figure out how to safely and effectively offer in-person and remote mentoring.

If your program doesn't already have a COVID-19 plan that clearly outlines how your program will adjust and respond to the various possibilities in the coming months, MENTOR Vermont encourages you to develop a plan and reach out for a sample plan you can adapt. MENTOR Vermont is here to assist you with this process. Here is a list of aspects that a successful plan should cover:

- **What types of mentor match interactions are permissible and when?**
  - Are matches currently allowed to meet in person?
  - How will things change if schools move to more in-person learning in the spring or as the State starts to loosen up restrictions again?
- **For programs allowing in-person mentoring:**
  - What training(s) are you providing mentors, mentees, and parents/guardians prior to allowing matches to meet in person?
  - Do participants need to sign any additional release waivers?
  - Are mentors allowed to transport their mentee in their vehicle, if both the mentor and mentee are wearing masks? If so, what guidelines do you have in place to help them do so as safely as possible?
    - Do windows need to be down? Where must the mentee sit? Is there a maximum amount of time allowed for travel?
  - What safety measures are realistic for matches to be able to comply with? Will matches be allowed to meet indoors?
  - Is anything different for mentors or mentees who have been vaccinated?
- **For programs with matches meeting remotely:**
  - What methods of remote mentoring is your program allowing and encouraging?
  - What additional training/resources/support are you providing matches to support them with this new mentoring model?
  - Do your mentees and mentors have the means to connect remotely (internet access, computer, smart phone, etc.) or will they need to communicate via mail?
  - How can you make this method of mentoring easier for your matches?
- **For school-based programs:**
  - Will your mentors be allowed in the school building this spring?
  - Is anything different for mentors who have been vaccinated?
  - How will you provide year-end closure for your matches?
  - If students return to more in-person learning in the spring, will that impact when your matches are meeting?
  - How are you planning on keeping mentees connected to your program and/or their mentees over the summer months?
- **For site-based programs:**
  - When/under what conditions would you allow for matches to resume meeting on site?
  - What safety measures will you need to implement at your site to allow matches to meet?
- **What constitutes an active match in your program and what is expected of mentors and mentees?**
  - MENTOR Vermont continues to recommend placing a greater emphasis on frequency of match interaction over duration of interaction at this time.



- What are the expectations of mentors and mentees at this time in terms of frequency of contact and duration of interactions?
- How do you determine if a match is connecting in a way that is beneficial to the youth or not?
- If a match isn't meeting your program's criteria, does your closure procedure need to be adjusted to be responsive to the current reality?
- **Recruitment, Training, & Matching:**
  - Is your program actively recruiting? If so, how has your marketing/promotion changed?
  - How are you conducting initial mentoring training? Are you adjusting training to ensure it remains engaging while still covering all required aspects? What new information needs to be covered?
  - Are you making new matches or rematching? How will initial match meetings happen?
- **Additional Items:**
  - How are you adjusting/enhancing match support during this time?
  - How do all of these changes in your program model align with your staff's safety and personal comfort in being able to perform their jobs?
  - Help mentees have a clear understanding of what to expect and how the guidelines your program has developed may change over time to reflect the currently reality in this ever-evolving situation.
  - It is likely that some mentees in your program are receiving less support from their mentors than others. We encourage you to be mindful of this inequity, and to try to identify ways that your program can provide additional support for these young people at this time while recognizing that mentors are doing everything they can and that some will be able to do more than others.

**For programs that wish to resume in-person mentoring, MENTOR Vermont's recommendations have been updated, as of March 15, 2021:**

- In response to the [Vermont Department of Health's updated guidelines on multihousehold gatherings](#) on March 12, 2021, MENTOR Vermont is lifting its recommendation that all youth mentoring programs in Vermont pause all in-person mentoring. Mentoring programs should refer to the considerations in this document when deciding if, when, and how to resume in-person mentoring. If your program is within a larger agency or school system, check in with your school district or parent organization to ensure your recommendations match up with their recommendations.
- Check in with your insurance carrier prior to resuming in-person mentoring to determine if they have restrictions or guidelines your program needs to follow in order to maintain coverage.
- Make resuming in-person mentoring an opt-in option instead of an opt-out. Mentors and mentees and their families should not feel like they need to resume in-person mentoring unless they are comfortable doing so.
- When resuming in-person mentoring :
  - Matches should meet outside, maintaining a six-foot distance, with both mentees and mentors wearing face coverings.
  - Mentoring programs that wish to allow mentors to transport their mentee should establish clear guidelines for their mentoring matches on how to safely do so. MENTOR Vermont recommends, at minimum, that both the mentor and mentee wear masks, the mentee be seated in the back seat when possible, and that windows in the car be left open while driving.
  - Programs should remind all mentors, mentees, and parents of your program's in-person mentoring COVID-19 guidelines.