



# 2023 Vermont Mentoring Survey Toolkit

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## Why Conduct Surveys

[Mentoring is a proven strategy for youth development](#) and there has been an abundance of national research conducted over the years to prove this. The research shows that youth in mentoring programs that meet best practices will receive benefits ranging from an increased likelihood to enroll in college to greater connection to their community. Conducting yearly program surveys to gather program-specific data is an integral part of running a quality youth mentoring program and will help with the following:

- **Provide Program Feedback:** Conducting yearly surveys with your program participants can provide invaluable feedback. Yearly surveys are a way for you to ensure that your program is having the desired impact you intend for the youth you serve. It also provides insight into what aspects of the program may need to change to deepen the impact.
- **Meet Best Practices:** Program evaluation is a major aspect necessary for a program to meet nationally recognized best practices.
- **Secure Program Funding:** High-quality program data can be used to paint a compelling picture of mentoring to program funders and illustrate the impact donor contributions have on the population you serve and your program.

## How to Use Survey Data

Survey data should allow program leaders to assess the quality of individual matches and how successful the mentoring program is in meeting its goals. By conducting annual participant surveys, programs will be able to better track the progress of mentees, matches, and program impact over time.

### Individual Surveys

Ideally, you will be able to use the information from individual surveys to determine the following (and hopefully much more):

- Does a match need more support?
- Are program expectations being met?
- Does the participant or caregiver need more frequent communication?
- How do the youth and mentor feel about their relationship?
- What general trends can you see in the match over time?

### Program-Wide Survey Data:

By evaluating the data gathered from surveys program-wide, you can determine the following (and hopefully much more):

- Are your matches achieving your desired outcomes?
- If there is a specific focus of your program, are you seeing results in that area?
- Are participants and stakeholder groups pleased with your program?
- Are there adjustments that need to be made to improve outcomes?
- Are there outcomes that you're achieving that you didn't expect?
- Can you see program-wide trends from one year to the next?
- Do matches see stronger results over time?



### **State-Wide Survey Data:**

At the statewide level, MENTOR Vermont will use data from the required Vermont Mentoring Grant (VMG) questions to reinforce how mentoring programs in Vermont are achieving the same [nationally-proven benefits of mentoring](#). The data will also enable MENTOR Vermont to see if there are common areas of need for programs across the state for which MENTOR Vermont should be focusing on providing additional support. We will also use this data to bolster our case for receiving greater funding support for the Vermont Mentoring Grants from the State, private foundations, businesses, and individual donors.

## **How to Access Survey Templates**

You can download the printable surveys [‘here.’](#)

## **FAQ**

### **What if I have an existing survey that my program already uses?**

Excellent! We encourage programs to use their own surveys – especially if they’re tailored to measure the unique aspects of your program. MENTOR Vermont no longer requires VMG recipients to administer our core survey. VMG recipients are only required to conduct a comprehensive yearly survey of youth and mentors measuring quality and match experience. Surveys must include the questions specifically outlined in the annual VMG RFP. Programs may use their own surveys, or the templates provided by MENTOR Vermont. The wording of required questions and the scale may not be altered beyond changing how you refer to your mentors and mentees (i.e. Bigs and Littles, Young Leaders, Partners) unless you have received prior approval from MENTOR Vermont.

### **What if I want to use the survey templates but want to add or omit questions?**

The MENTOR Vermont survey templates serve as a foundation for programs to get the necessary information to evaluate mentors and mentees and the impact of the mentoring relationship. We encourage programs to add additional questions or omit select questions to best serve your program’s evaluation needs. Reminder – VMG recipients must include the questions outlined in the RFP and may not omit those questions.

### **Why do questions have thumb images for the scale?**

People learn and intake information in different ways; these images are intended to make the surveys more accessible for individuals of all ages and abilities. While the images are encouraged, they are not required.

### **Response Rate:**

To ensure an adequate level of responses to evaluate your program, MENTOR Vermont recommends obtaining at least a 60% response rate. This is the minimum response rate required of VMG recipients.



## Survey Administration

### When

For data consistency, we recommend that mentoring programs designate a specific time of year (ideally two to six weeks) to conduct annual surveys. The two to six-week window is important because if the surveying time is too long, the collective results will not accurately represent a snapshot in time of your program.

### Who

Your program will administer surveys to mentees and mentors. We encourage administering surveys to other program stakeholders, such as caregivers and teachers/counselors.

### How

Programs should administer surveys in a means that will yield valid data, and the best response rate, be as easy as possible for participants to complete, and minimize staff time. If you wish to use the MENTOR Vermont survey templates, they are provided in two printable documents that can then be customized by the program. We recommend programs do one of the following administration methods:

1. Build out the surveys through SurveyMonkey. Programs can create a free account. While building out the surveys with the image scale takes some time, once you own the survey, you can duplicate and continue to use it annually.
2. Build out the surveys through Google Forms. Like Survey Monkey, Google forms are accessible via a free account.
3. Provide a PDF to be completed in a PDF filler.
4. Provide paper copies.

By having participants complete surveys online, all the responses will be saved in the online platform. If program coordinators would prefer a digital method of delivery but have questions about building out the surveys through one of the suggested platforms, they may reach out to the [Training and Support Director](#) at MENTOR Vermont for support.

### ID Numbers

You will need to decide if you wish for your surveys to be anonymous or trackable. There are valid reasons for either method. If you wish to track matches year to year, you may want to consider applying an "ID Number" that can be included at the top or each survey. This is done instead of a name to maintain a baseline level of ensuring that the participant's information remains anonymous. Each participant in your program should have a unique number.

#### **For users of the [Vermont Mentoring Database](#):**

You can run the "Mentee Number" report under the "Shared" reports tab to find your pre-set mentee numbers.

#### **Non-Vermont Mentoring Database Users:**

Contact the [Training and Support Director](#) and they will provide you a spreadsheet template you can use that will include the following columns:

- ID Number
- Gender



- Current Age
- Date participant first joined mentoring program

Remember, you will need to provide the appropriate ID number to each of the participants you survey. An ID number should remain consistent from year to year. If a participant leaves your program, their ID number should not be reassigned.

## Standardized Survey Administration Instructions

- If individuals taking the survey feel a question doesn't apply to them, they should skip the question.
- If a mentee asks for clarification on a question or about what something means:
  - Don't provide your interpretation of the question or rephrase the question.
  - Ask the mentee what they think it means. Whatever they think it means is fine.
  - If the mentee is really stuck, they can skip the question.

### **Overall Tips for Administering Surveys**

- Ensure you pick a defined time period in which your program will administer surveys. MENTOR Vermont recommends a six-week window in which you have the necessary staff time to dedicate to this process. To get a good return rate you will need to have time to reach out multiple times to those whom you wish to complete surveys.
- Let the person being surveyed know why their responses are important.
- Be honest and upfront with how long the survey will take.
- Provide clear, concise instructions with the survey that explain how to complete the survey and how to return it once completed (see page 10 for a sample communication template).
- Make taking and returning the survey as easy as possible. All surveys can be filled out through SurveyMonkey with a unique link for your program, or printed out.
- Some programs have found that offering a drawing for a donated gift card to people that complete the survey has led to increased participation.
- If you choose to mail blank surveys to constituents, include a self-addressed envelope to return the survey in (if you're able to, you may want to consider including postage as well).

### **Tips for Administering Surveys to Mentees:**

All mentees should complete the survey a comfortable distance away from any person, or other youth who may distract or influence the responses.

### **Mentees under 10 years old:**

For younger mentees, it is recommended that the survey be read aloud to the youth, and that the youth tells their answers to a program staff member who will record the answers for them. Surveys should not be administered by the mentee's mentor. Ideally, surveys should be administered to younger mentees by a program staff member or a guidance counselor. This will help ensure the mentee's responses aren't influenced by their mentor being present.

When the mentee you're working with is filling out the actual rating scales, you may



find that you will need to read each item aloud as they read along, and then the mentee can select their response to the question. If you add open-ended questions to your survey where you are asking for mentees to write, it is fine if they simply wish to tell you, and have you record their response, word for word, on the survey sheet.

**Mentees 10 and older:**

Mentees should receive clear directions from you on how to fill out the survey, and how and when they should return the survey to you if using the printed version. Don't forget to provide them with their "ID Number" if applicable. For older mentees, it is fine to have them complete the survey on their own. Administering surveys via email or mail is also appropriate.

**Tips for Administering Surveys to Mentors, Caregivers, or Teachers/Counselors:**

You will need to provide each constituent the "ID Number" (if applicable) for the mentee they are completing the survey about.

If you add open-ended questions to your program's surveys, please inform those taking the survey to avoid using the mentee's name in their responses to ensure survey results are anonymous. Recommend using phrases such as, my mentee, this student, etc., instead of names. Provide this guidance in the survey instructions.

## Sample Survey Outreach Template

Below is a communication template you can customize for communicating with mentors. You can adjust the template for emailing mentees, parents/guardians, etc. Make sure to provide clear, concise instructions on how to complete the survey. If you've added open-ended questions to your survey, please be sure to remind those taking the survey to not use the mentee's name in their response.

**Sample email to a mentor:**

*Hello \_\_\_\_\_,*

*Thank you for being a mentor in (Name of Program). We are currently conducting our yearly evaluations and would appreciate if you could help us by completing a short survey by (enter date). Completing this survey will help us evaluate our program to ensure we're running the best program possible for your mentee and all the youth we serve!*

*You can access the survey here: (your program's delivery method). You will be asked to enter a "Mentee ID Number" at the top of the survey. This will help us gather data that we can track over time. Your mentee's ID number is: (provide unique mentee ID number from spreadsheet).*

*The survey should only take (est. XX minutes or less) minutes to complete, but should be done in one sitting. The survey data that we collect will help us determine how to improve our program and will assist us in proving data to our funders*

*Thank you in advance for completing the survey and for all you do to make a lasting positive impact in the life of (Name of Mentee). If you have any questions, please be in touch.*

## Responsibilities of Interviewer

### Set the tone:

- Be friendly and warm (but not overly sweet or intrusive).  
*Be confident in what you are doing (know your interview, know your role) so you can pay attention to how the conversation is going. It's fine to be nervous, but watch out for body language or nonverbal cues that give the impression you are uncomfortable, uninterested, or disapproving.*
- Be transparent  
*Always start by explaining who you are, why you are here, and what is going to happen. Don't skip details or speed through the introductory comments - each mentee is hearing what you have to say for the first time (even if you feel like it's the 100<sup>th</sup> time you've said it).*
- Be clear  
*Avoid too much detail - don't "over-talk" (easy mistake when nervous or uncomfortable). Make sure to **GO SLOW** - read questions slowly, move on to next question slowly.*
- Be competent  
*Know the interview inside and out. Mistakes are fine - "woops, I missed something," or "sorry, let me read that again" - but sloppy interviewing is ineffective.*
- Be Thorough  
*When filling out your actual ratings, make sure that you are filling out the right row for each sentence, and not marking an answer in the row above or below by mistake. You may want to run your finger along each row to make sure that everything lines up.*
- Affirm without leading  
*Encourage talking without encouraging specific sorts of responses. You may like or dislike certain things you hear, but you should not give positive feedback (nodding, smiling, laughing) for only those answers you like or agree with.*
- Repeat/Echo.  
*If a mentee says, "I feel scared when the big kids yell at each other on the playground," you can say (as you write down what the mentee said), "It's scary when the big kids yell on the playground."*
- Acknowledge.  
*React, but don't overreact.*



### **Before you start to interview**

- Know your interview backwards and forwards.
- Know the purpose of each question.
- Be able to do the interview without your eyes glued to the page.
- Practice
- Practice reading the questions aloud. Highlight certain sections, add notes to yourself.
- Ask a friend to role play – practice asking questions and writing down answers (and get feedback).
- Interview someone who is similar to your target audience (e.g., similar age) – young family member/relative, friend, neighborhood kid (get permission from parents).

### **Extreme importance of confidentiality**

- Don't talk about mentees/survey responses in front of other mentees.
- Your program should decide how you will handle confidentiality specifically around the surveys.
- Know what to do when something comes up.
- If a mentee tells you about an event or circumstance that is a danger to themselves or others, you should follow your program's youth safety reporting procedure.

### **Helpful phrases**

- *"Hold on – It takes me a minute to write this down."*
- *"Let me check to see if I missed anything."*
- *"You said \_\_\_\_\_ [repeat/read your notes]. Did I get that right?"*
- *"Can you tell me more about that?"*
- *"What is it about that...?"* (rather than "Why?")
- *"Let's finish up these questions and then we can talk more about [side track topic] if you want..."*
- *"I can understand that..."* (use carefully – not just for "socially acceptable" responses)

### **Challenges you may face**

- Mentees not wanting to participate and/or not wanting to answer honestly
- Distractions – noise, friends, activity nearby
- Mentees trying to please you (guessing at "right" answers)
- Mentees trying to impress you
- Mentees being afraid of getting in trouble for certain answers, or giving a "wrong answer"
- Interviewer feeling defensive, frustrated, or annoyed
- Getting off topic

### **Wrapping up the Interview**

- Offer genuine thanks – say it and show it
- Repeat why this interview is important, repeat other relevant details
- Ask "Is there anything else?"  
*One great way to end an interview is to say: "I've asked you a lot of questions, but I know everyone is different and maybe I didn't ask about something that is important to you. Is there anything else you want to tell me about what it's like for you in [Name of Program]?" (This can be shortened for younger mentees)*





### **Finish the job**

Once the interviewee leaves, you still have important things to do

- Add notes (but don't alter answers for data integrity)
- Fix hard to read sections
- Double check names/codes

## **Suggested Additional Questions**

Whether you are utilizing the MENTOR Vermont survey templates or your own surveys, MENTOR Vermont recommends including some questions that allow the respondent to provide open-ended feedback. This is to ensure that everyone connected to the mentee has the opportunity to share detailed information that goes beyond the scaled questions that are standardized. Because programs are looking to gather this type of feedback in multiple ways, MENTOR Vermont does not want to limit those efforts by requiring a specific question or questions. Some examples programs have used in years past include:

- Is there anything you would like to share about your experience with the program?
- What are some of the things you like best about mentoring with [Program X]?
- What are some things that would make your experience with [Program X] better?
- Share a short story about your mentoring experience.
- What types of activities would you like [Program X] to organize next year?
- Have you and your mentee set and achieved goals together this year? Please describe.

## **Additional Resources**

For additional evaluation support, MENTOR Vermont encourages agencies to explore the following resources:

- [Request](#) technical assistance through the [National Mentoring Resource Center \(NMRC\)](#) to receive personalized one-on-one support with developing a program theory of change and/or comprehensive surveys tailored to measure your program's impact
- [NMRC Home Page](#)
- NMRC [Measurement Guidance Toolkit](#) for recommended instruments for measuring key youth outcomes in mentoring programs as well as several risk and protective factors that may be relevant to program outcomes.
- NMRC [Logic Models and Theories of Change](#) resources for several types of youth mentoring programs. Examples can help programs craft more effective mentoring programs for specific youth populations and outcomes.
- MENTOR Vermont Evaluation Support webpage - **COMING SOON!**

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