



2022 Vermont Mentoring Survey Toolkit

If you have any questions related to the surveys or how to access them, please contact us at sarah@mentorvt.org or 802-277-2418.

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MENTOR Vermont Evaluation Strategy

As you may have seen [posted on the VT Mentoring Hub](#), MENTOR VT is working on a new Evaluation Strategy. Our recently finalized [theory of change](#) is reshaping the way we think about how we evaluate our work, and our data collection methods - particularly with what we ask programs to gather. Over the last year, we have been collaborating with [Dr. Amy Syvertsen \(Search Institute\)](#) to help us put the puzzle pieces together, and we're excited to share the direction we're headed with this strategy with the mentoring community. You can learn more by viewing this 15-minute [video](#) providing an overview of this new strategy.

Vermont Mentoring Surveys

One of the main changes outlined in the updated MENTOR Vermont Evaluation Strategy is a move away from the catch-all Vermont Mentoring Surveys and the Core Survey requirement for Vermont Mentoring Grant recipients and towards a more individual program evaluation focus.

What this means for your program:

- As dictated by best practices, programs should run yearly comprehensive program evaluations.
- If you're a Vermont Mentoring Grant recipient, you need to gather the data necessary to fully complete your year-end grant report, but there is no longer a core survey you need to implement.
 - You can view the year-end report through the [VT Mentoring Grant system](#) or in the [RFP](#).
- If you have historically used the full VT Mentoring Surveys to evaluate your program you still can. The updated mentee and mentor surveys can be found ['here.'](#)

It is MENTOR VT's hope in the next year or two that all mentoring programs in the state have their own theory of change and evaluation strategy to assess the impact of their program. We are here to support you with this effort and look forward to working with all of you to help make your program as impactful as possible.

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 program surveys with your constituents can provide your program with invaluable feedback. Yearly surveys are a way for you to ensure that your program is in fact having the desired impact you intend for the youth you serve.
- **Meet Best Practices:** Program evaluation is one of the major aspects that is necessary for a program to meet nationally recognized best practices.
- **Secure Program Funding:** You will be able to use the statewide data, coupled with your individual program's data, to assist you with in securing more funding for your program from donors, businesses, and foundations.

It is our hope that the surveys are a tool your program will be able to easily use to evaluate your program and in turn provide MENTOR Vermont with statewide aggregate mentoring data to better support mentoring throughout Vermont.

How to Use Survey Data

On an individual program level, survey data received should allow program leaders to evaluate individual matches and the mentoring program as a whole. Over time, as surveys are administered year-after-year, programs will be able to better track the progress of mentees, matches, and program impact.



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 expectations being met?
- Does the parent or guardian need more frequent communication?
- How does the mentee feel about school?
- 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 constituent 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 hopes to use the survey data gathered to support our current claim to funders: that 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 hope to 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 Surveys

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

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

We realize that programs may have their own surveys they have been using for years. If your agency is a Vermont Mentoring Grant recipient, a grant reporting requirement is to gather the data necessary to fully complete your year-end grant



report. You can view the year-end reporting the VT Mentoring Grant system or in the RFP, but there is no longer a core survey you need to implement. We encourage you to review the Vermont Mentoring Surveys and see if there are questions beyond the required reporting questions (highlighted in yellow) that you might be interested in including but this is not a requirement, just something to consider if you like any of the questions enough to include. 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 Vermont Mentoring Surveys but want to add questions to the surveys?

The Vermont Mentoring Survey questions 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 to best serve evaluation needs.

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. If you are not currently using these images, but want to combine the Vermont Mentoring Survey with an existing survey, MENTOR Vermont can provide you with the corresponding image files for the scale to include in your survey system.

Response Rate:

To ensure an adequate level of responses to be able to evaluate your program MENTOR Vermont recommends obtaining at least a 60% response rate

Administering Surveys

When

The vision for these surveys is that they will become a natural part of your program. We recommend that mentoring programs find a specific time period (ideally no longer than six-weeks) to conduct their yearly surveys each year to create consistency with the data that is gathered. The six-week window is important because if the surveying time is too long, the results will not correctly represent a snapshot in time of your program.

Who

Your program will administer surveys to mentees and mentors. You may also want to consider administering surveys to caregivers and teachers/counselors.



How

You should strive to administer surveys in a means that will yield the best response rate, be as easy as possible for constituents complete, and minimize staff time needed to be dedicated to the process. If you wish to use the Vermont Mentoring Surveys, 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 year after year
2. Build out the surveys through Google Forms. Similar to Survey Monkey, Google forms is accessible via a free account.
3. Provide as a PDF to be completed in a PDF filler
4. Provide paper copies

Using Online Surveys:

By having your constituents' complete surveys through your program's digital surveys, all of the responses will automatically be saved in the online platform. If program coordinators would prefer a digital method of delivery but are 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 directly.

Mentee ID Number

You will need to decide if you wish for your surveys to be anonymous or trackable. There are reasons for both methods. If you wish to be able to track matches year to year tracking you may want to consider a "Mentee 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 mentee's information remains anonymous. Each mentee in your program should have a unique mentee number.

Full 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:

- Mentee ID Number
- Gender
- Current Age
- Date mentee first joined mentoring program

Remember, you will need to provide the appropriate mentee number to each of the constituents you survey. A mentee's ID number should remain consistent from year



to year. If a mentee leaves your program, their mentee ID number should still not be assigned to another mentee.

Standardized Survey Administration Instructions

- If individuals taking the survey feel a question doesn't apply to them, they should select the "No Answer" option.
- 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.

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 mark whichever answer is most accurate. 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. It is often found that youth are happier speaking their answer to an adult rather than writing it down themselves. However, if they prefer to write it down themselves, that is fine too.

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 "Mentee 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 "Mentee 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 to MENTOR Vermont. Using the following phrases instead of names is recommended:

- My mentee
- My child
- This student



Sample Survey Outreach Template

Below is a communication template you can customize for your program to use in communicating with mentors. You can adjust the template for emailing mentees, parents/guardians, and teachers/counselors.

Make sure to provide clear, concise instructions with the survey explaining how to complete the survey.

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 providing 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.

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.

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 100th 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 Vermont Mentoring Surveys or your own surveys, MENTOR Vermont recommends including some questions that allows 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.

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