

DOD Mentoring Resource Portal

MENTORING PROCESS: HOW TO ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN AND CLOSE A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Information for Supervisors Portfolio

MENTORING PROCESS: HOW TO ESTABLISH, MAINTAIN AND CLOSE A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP

Purpose:

To offer a set of steps to guide Experienced Supervisors and New Supervisors through the mentoring process.

Audience:

New and Experienced Supervisors

Common Terms

The following are common terms associated with the DOD Mentoring Resource Portal:

Mentor, also known as Advisor, is a trusted counselor or guide who is involved in the development and support of one who is less experienced.

New Supervisor, also known as Protégé or Learner, is the more junior person being mentored.

Mentoring Program Coordinator, also known as Mentoring Program Manager, is responsible for the overall management of the mentoring program.

Information Source Disclaimer

Most of the information on this mentoring resource was obtained and adapted from the following documents: WHS Director of Administration and Management Enterprise Mentoring, Tools for Advisors. Headquarters, Department of Army, DCS, G-1 ARMY MENTORSHIP HANDBOOK. United States Marine Corps, Marine Corps University – Mentoring. All content is provided for informational purposes only.

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Formal Mentoring Programs normally pair participants for six months to one-year. Good mentoring relationships might not ever end or could end when the New Supervisor has changed expectations or the need for the Experienced Supervisor's guidance and direction has changed. There are six potential steps to developing, maintaining, and closing a mentoring connection.

1.0 IDENTIFICATION STAGE

Most supervisory mentoring associations are formed haphazardly, except where a Mentoring Program is in place. Where no program exists, either an Experienced Supervisor or New Supervisor may initiate the mentoring connection. Experienced Supervisors look for New Supervisors with potential for improvement who need guidance. New Supervisors recognize that they need assistance with some facet of their professional development and seek help to improve. There may be some common bond between Experienced Supervisor and New Supervisor such gender, race, hometown, profession, hobbies, unit, etc.

2.0 PREPARATION STAGE

The Experienced Supervisor and New Supervisor must want to establish the mentoring association. They should understand the purpose of the relationship, expectations, goals, risks, and rewards.

3.0 INITIATION STAGE

The Experienced Supervisor and New Supervisor set the parameters, discuss and set goals, decide on time-frames, and write a plan with a time-frame.

4.0 CULTIVATION STAGE

This is the stage where the Experienced Supervisor teaches job skills, provides guidance, lends psychological support, opens doors, and provides counsel. The New Supervisor works to improve performance, learn new skills, follow guidance, and actively learn the organization, its goals and "ethos."

5.0 REDEFINITION/TRANSITION STAGE

During the transition process, there are a few activities to complete. New Supervisors, touch-base with the Experienced Supervisors to:

Review the New Supervisor's Action Plan and developmental goals to measure progress, and to determine if you should engage in any subsequent follow-on developmental activities post mentoring relationship.

Celebrate your successes! Boast about your accomplishments. Revisit the journey. Share your appreciations about each other. There is an old saying “If you don’t have a sense of where you come from, going backward looks like progress.”

Discuss your relationship transition. Stay in touch on an informal basis.

The transition stage offers the opportunity for reflection and growth, allowing the harvesting of our learning.

Some questions to discuss when you meet include:

- What did you learn?
- What were the implications of that learning?
- How can I apply and integrate that learning?
- What other development opportunities could be helpful?
- What did we learn about each other? What are our gifts and strengths? “I admire you’re...”
- “You have a real knack for...”
- “I especially appreciated it when you...”
- What didn’t work so well and why? What did you learn from these experiences? Missteps offer rich experiences for learning.
- Having a reflective conversation about specific learning that has taken place during, and as a result of the mentoring partnership, encourages the relationship to come to a learning conclusion.
- What worked well in our partnership? What did we learn about ourselves?

6.0 TERMINATION/CLOSURE STAGE - WHEN DOES A MENTORING RELATIONSHIP END?

Parties may decide during the redefinition stage to terminate the association due to positive or negative factors or at this point, the relationship may evolve into a friendship. Other mentoring relationships end because they fail to become productive and comfortable. The Experienced Supervisor and New Supervisor may never establish rapport, or one or both parties may not commit adequate time or effort. There may be a failure to communicate goals, needs, intentions, or expectations. The likelihood of this happening is greatest when New Supervisors and Experienced Supervisors are “matched” by a third party, or agree to the relationship without much consideration and discussion of needs and expectations.

The relationship may also end if either the Experienced Supervisor or New Supervisor relocates to another area or leaves the organization. It is not necessary for the relationship to end in these instances, but is possible.

Both Experienced Supervisors and New Supervisors should feel free to end mentoring relationships that do not meet their expectations. In most cases, if one party feels it is not working, the other feels the same. At this point, the New Supervisor should be encouraged to find a new Experienced Supervisor and terminate the relationship as a “no fault” termination.