

DEVELOPING A MENTORING PROGRAM

The Community Nurse Mentor Program is a program to provide community nurse support to nursing students from their first course in nursing school to their 1st year of employment. This program is predicted to improve retention and job satisfaction. The mentoring program was developed through an extensive literature review in which the mentor education packet, mentor/mentee match profile forms, and program evaluation tools were based on.

Nurses who are working professionals are recruited to support nursing students. The program highlights the relationship that benefits the student best, that of a concerned professional, who has been there and can assist and welcome the student into the nursing profession. Students benefit by having increased self-esteem, development of professional behaviors, networking opportunities, and nurturing. This mentoring program differs from any others cited in literature because it is modeled on psychosocial functions only, not career or job performance function.

Recruitment strategies include an informational brochure for all contacts. This can be mailed or simply used as a handout for potential mentors. Additionally, meetings will need to be held with key partners in the community healthcare agencies to strategize recruitment of staff nurses. Obtaining access to promote the program with nurses who are actively involved in patient care is a key strategy. Presenting mentor program information at other local healthcare agency staff meetings, such as home health agencies, public health facilities, and school nurses increase the potential pool. Developing relationships with the managers and directors and local professional nursing organizations is also necessary.

Mentors complete a self-study continuing education module which provides information and education about the unique aspect of mentoring nursing students. Most nurses who have been mentored have received a preceptor mode which includes mentoring, but do not understand the differences between how they have been mentored and this program. Mentoring is primarily used in the employment setting to assist with the development of skills.

Both students and mentors complete a profile that focuses on their professional and personal interests and style of communication. Once profiles have been received from both students and mentors, the information from the profile is used to facilitate successful matches based on compatibility. Literature supports the most effective matches are based on common interests, similar likes and dislikes and professional goals.

Mentors are required to submit a contact log every month, via email preferably but accommodations will be made if this is not convenient for the mentor. The mentor and mentee are requested to report any problems they may be experiencing with either their relationship or the mentoring program. They are encouraged to call or email the mentoring program coordinator.

The mentor and mentee are also required to complete a mentor program evaluation tool. The tool is completed by the mentor and mentees at the end of every semester (approximately every 3-4 months). This tool is mailed to the participants with a self-addressed prepaid postage envelope. Evaluation components include satisfaction with amount of contact, whether the participants felt that the relationship worked, and what benefits they received.

Problem solving of mentor/mentee issues are resolved by the mentoring program coordinator. Problems could include a poor match due to time constraints, no common interests, strained communication, lack of mentor and/or mentee commitment, lack of mentor and/or mentee understanding of role and the mentor or mentee withdrawing from program. Resolution of the problem(s) may include ascertaining the reason perceived by the participant to determine if problem between pair can be resolved, if not, the program coordinator should match both individuals with other participants. The mentor and mentee should both be advised at the beginning of the program and as a part of their agreement form, that they may at any time request a different match or withdraw from program participation without being required to explain

(although they are encouraged to provide this feedback). This is important to allow those who are unsure of participating an opportunity to try without consequences if it is not right for them.

Components of Mentoring Self-Study Packet

- Mentor Welcome Letter and Instructions
- Continuing Education Registration form
- Mentor Program Self-Study Education
- Mentor Contract
- Mentor Profile (questionnaire)
- Contact Log form
- Mentor Program Evaluation form

Mentee Components

- Mentee Profile (questionnaire)
- Mentee Contract
- Mentee Program Evaluation form

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