Mentoring Design for WNEP

Rev. 2013
Originally Prepared April 2007
by WNEP Mentoring workgroup members: Becky Gutzman, Shelley King-Curry, Ione Meoska, Donna Peterson, Gerry Berg-Sutton, Tanya Kirtz, Brenda Herrell

Introduction
People are UW-Extension’s most valuable resource. Their knowledge and skills produce the quality educational programs that benefit Wisconsin’s families. Mentoring can help new WNEP colleagues succeed by ensuring that they are oriented, supported and trained. Mentoring helps open channels of communication, and provides a way of sharing expertise and wisdom with recently hired colleagues.

Mentoring is not a substitute for orientation or training. It builds helpful and supportive relationships that are essential to the success of new colleagues. Mentoring can be an effective component of the onboarding process. The mentoring process links an experienced colleague (mentor) with a less experienced colleague (mentee) to help foster the career development and professional growth of the mentee. Mentoring may be performed by an individual (another WNEP Coordinator or Nutrition Educator) and by a team/group of individuals that could include the WNEP Advisor, WNEP Regional Representative, and Family Living office colleague(s).

Mentoring relationships provide vision to new colleagues and to those in a new position a clearer understanding of WNEP’s expectations.

Mentor Benefits

- Provides an opportunity to lead and support others
- Freshens mentor’s perspective of his/her job and the organization
- Strengthens mentor’s listening and support skills
- Enables mentors to network with new colleagues and learn about new programs and resources

Mentee Benefits

- Establish a collegial relationship with someone who has a similar job
- Obtain a more complete understanding of WNEP and UW-Extension
- Receive help in identifying orientation and training needs
- Achieve greater job satisfaction
- Receive support for participating in professional development opportunities
WNEP Benefits

- Creates an atmosphere that fosters initiative, creativity and trust
- Develops successful networking and communication
- Builds capacity among individuals and teams
- Enhances productivity
- Improves staff retention

One Size Doesn’t Fit All
WNEP staff work in a variety of positions and situations. Mentoring is intended to be an informal process that connects colleagues. The relationship is defined by the experienced colleague (mentor) and the new colleague (mentee). It is important that a mentor helps the new colleague see how his or her unique and individual strengths can be used in their new position.

Characteristics of Successful Mentoring

- Supportive
  A mentor listens and supports the needs and aspirations of a mentee. The mentee is willing to bring concerns and questions to the mentor. A mentor encourages the mentee to accept challenges and overcome difficulties.

- Patience
  A mentor is patient and willing to spend time fostering a relationship with the mentee. Time commitments are negotiated by the mentee and his/her mentor or mentoring team.

- Respectful
  Mentors and mentees are respectful of each other by keeping commitments and appointments with one another, maintaining confidentiality, and exercising flexibility.

Team Approach to Mentoring

- Many individuals and groups have a stake in the growth of the mentee. This approach emphasizes the need for mentors to recognize and value the supportive roles of others who contribute. Care should be given to avoid mixed messages or conflicting advice.

- WNEP has a commitment to teamwork. The mentoring relationship includes encouraging the mentee to be open to the value and use of team approaches.

Mentoring Team Members

Possible team members for new WNEP Coordinators

- WNEP Program Advisor
- WNEP Regional Representative
- WNEP Coordinator having experience with a similar type of County Project
- Family Living Educator in County
Possible team members for new WNEP Educators

- WNEP Coordinator
- WNEP Educator Colleagues in Program Unit
- WNEP Educator Colleague in neighboring county (especially if there are no other educators in program unit)
- Other Family Living Office Colleague(s)

Considerations for selecting a mentor/mentoring team

- Location is relatively near the new colleague.
- Program interests or projects are similar.
- Appointments or situations are similar.
- Leadership and professionalism in their work has been demonstrated.

WNEP Advisors along with the State WNEP Coordinator upon receiving knowledge of a WNEP Coordinator vacancy will begin considering a potential mentoring team and encourage those individuals to express their willingness. WNEP coordinators upon beginning the hiring process for a new nutrition educator will also begin to determine potential mentor(s) for the new educator.

Who Gets a Mentor?

It is recommended that new WNEP Coordinators and Educators have a mentor/mentoring team identified and selected upon starting in their new position.

For new WNEP Educators, a mentor or a mentoring team is selected from the suggestions above by the WNEP Coordinator.

For new WNEP Coordinators, the WNEP Advisor consults with the State WNEP Coordinator, Family Living Liaison, and/or other WNEP Advisors to identify a mentor or a mentoring team from the suggestions above.

Each mentee will be encouraged to meet with their mentor or mentoring team for an on-going relationship during their first year of employment.

Mentoring Timeline

- Prior to Start Date

Prior to a new WNEP Coordinator being hired, the WNEP Advisor will initiate the identification of a potential WNEP Coordinator to be a mentor as part of a mentoring team. Members of the team will need to discuss contacting the mentee on their first day to introduce themselves, give a welcome to UW-Extension, schedule a first meeting time, and provide orientation resources, including those available online such as: http://www.uwex.edu/ces/nco/index.cfm and http://www.uwex.edu/ces/about/

Once a new WNEP Educator is hired, the Coordinator will identify from their program team another Educator to be a lead person for mentoring in addition to themselves. If there are no other educators in program unit, the Coordinator, with assistance from other Coordinators in his/her area may identify the WNEP educator(s) from a neighboring county to support in mentoring.
First Six Weeks on the Job
The most important work of the mentor/mentoring team happens during these first few weeks. The first visits should not be delayed for more than a week or two, if possible, and the mentor/mentoring team should look for opportunities to be with the new colleague, and schedule time to be available to discuss questions. The mentor/mentoring team can:
- help the mentee feel welcome at meetings.
- schedule time to discuss questions that come up.
- explain how the Program Area, WNEP and the CES regions operate.

First Three Months on the Job
During this time the mentor/mentoring team helps the mentee move forward in their role, and help them focus the advice and direction that has been provided. In addition to continuing to answer questions and provide feedback as needed, the mentor/mentoring team reviews, clarifies and fills in any gaps of information about Professional development opportunities, Family Living State Teams, Academic staff governance, and functions of Extension support units such as Program Development and Evaluation, CE Publishing and Human Resources, etc.

In situations where an existing position was refilled the mentor/mentoring team should attempt to help the new colleague determine the past programming done in this role.

In each situation the new colleague should be encouraged to start networking by developing a list of potential partners within and outside of Extension.

Six Months to One Year
The frequency of contacts with the new colleague may decrease although mentors/mentoring team can continue to reinforce the orientation steps being provided by others. Maintain contact by traveling to meetings together, monthly emails, and/or monthly phone calls.

After the First Year
The decision to continue a mentoring relationship after the first year will be that of the mentee and mentor/mentoring team members. To effectively encourage and support new colleagues, mentors are asked to commit for a minimum of one year, although because of job roles some relationships will continue beyond this time. During the first year, if a mentoring relationship is not or no longer effective, the mentee or mentor should communicate this to the WNEP Advisor and another mentor/mentoring team member could be selected.

Mentoring Checklist
A mentoring checklist is being provided to assist both the mentee and mentor in determining some of the questions and information that is often shared and discussed. Please note that discussions and questions are not limited to this list. Please consider using it as a guide or a way to begin to plan your time when you meet.
### Mentoring Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topics</th>
<th>Resources shared/Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Questions about reporting requirements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and ideas for keeping records</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions on the Annual planning process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time management hints</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locations and suggestions for Professional development and staff training opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about regional and state meetings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions regarding Title review process</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information on the WNEP and/or FLP websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideas for visits to other WNEP counties</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and discussion on WNEP curriculum resources and programming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational Memberships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information about Program Area Teams</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>