

Mentoring Design for WNEP

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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 orientation 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 or by a team/group of individuals that could include WNEP Advisors, District Representatives, other coordinator(s)/educators and 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 mentor and the new colleague (mentee). It is important that the mentor help 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 District Representative
- WNEP Coordinator within the District
- Office colleague(s)
- Other colleague(s) in UW-Extension

Possible team members for new WNEP Educators

- WNEP Coordinator
- WNEP Educator Colleagues in Program Unit

- WNEP Educator Colleague in neighboring county (if there are no other educators in program unit)
- Office Colleague (s)
- Other colleague(s) in UW-Extension

Considerations for selecting a mentor/mentoring team

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

Colleagues interested in being a mentor are encouraged to express their willingness to those involved in the selection process.

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/mentoring team is selected from the suggestions above by the WNEP Coordinator.

For new WNEP Coordinators, the WNEP Advisor along with the WNEP Representative for their district will identify a mentor 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*

Once a new WNEP Coordinator is hired, the WNEP District Representative and WNEP Advisor will identify another Coordinator from the district as a mentor or to be part of a mentoring team.

Members of the team will contact 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 will identify a WNEP educator 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, 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 districts work.

▪ *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 provided by their mentor/team leaders and/or Coordinator. 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 District meetings, Family Living State Teams, Academic staff governance, and functions of Extension support units such as Wisplan, Distance Education and CE Publishing.

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, another mentor/mentoring team member should be selected.

After two years, during the title review process, the mentee may choose to continue the relationship with the original mentor or opt for a new mentor at that point. *For more information on the title review process, go to <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/hr/policies/titleforms.cfm>*

Mentoring Checklist

Topics	Date Discussed	Resources shared/Comments
Reporting requirements		
Record keeping requirements/hints		
Quarterly reports		
Annual plan		
Time management hints		
Professional development and staff training opportunities		
Expectations of county colleagues		
Information about district and state meetings		
Title review process		
Use of web site		
Visits to other WNEP counties		
Success Stories		
Organizational Memberships		
WNEP Timeline for the year		
Information about Program Area Teams		

Performance Review Process		