

MODULE 4

EARLY LITERACY MENTOR-COACHING AND SUPERVISION

CONTEXT

Mentor-coaching is most successful when all of the professionals involved understand and recognize their roles and responsibilities. The role of mentor-coaching and the role of supervision encompass two different sets of responsibilities that occasionally overlap. Some Mentor-Coaches work only with their peers, and some work with other staff members, volunteers, or the children's family members. This module examines the relationship between mentor-coaching and supervision, what distinguishes the two, and why everyone must be clear about other people's roles and responsibilities. Mentor-Coaches also have a responsibility to be clear with their protégés about the mentor-coaching role and the supervisory role.

TIME: 2 hours

OVERVIEW

- Responsibilities of Mentor-Coaches and Supervisors (5 minutes)
- Considerations for Mentor-Coaches in Different Roles (10 minutes)
- Exercise 1: Analyzing a Vignette (45 minutes)
- Exercise 2: Using the Guide for Interviewing Program Leaders About Mentor-Coach Systems (30 minutes)
- Exercise 3: Assessing Your Needs for Your Professional Development Plan (30 minutes).

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By completing this module, you will:

- Be able to distinguish and clarify Mentor-Coach and supervisory roles
- Gain awareness of Early Head Start and Head Start program policies and procedures that affect your work with protégés
- Strengthen your capacity to meet the early literacy and language development needs of all children
- Develop your Professional Development Plan.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF MENTOR-COACHES AND SUPERVISORS

This chart outlines some of the different responsibilities of Mentor-Coaches and supervisors. Please share this chart with your protégés. It is useful for learning about the distinctions between the two roles.

| Responsibility | Supervisors | Mentor-Coaches |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Focus Area | Help the teaching team to improve practices related to all aspects of the program’s educational services, including language and literacy development. | Help the teaching team to improve practices related to children’s language and literacy development. |
| Professional Development | Oversee all aspects of protégés’ professional development. | Focus more narrowly on protégés’ professional development as it relates to children’s language and literacy development. |
| Observation and Feedback | Observe and comment on all areas of protégés’ performance. | Observe and comment on all issues related to teaching language and literacy development. |
| Goal-Setting | Set goals and develop strategies for meeting goals for all supervisees’ performance in all areas. | Help protégés set goals and develop strategies for meeting goals related to children’s progress in developing language and literacy skills and abilities. |
| Accountability | Hold the teaching team accountable for meeting goals in accordance with program policies. Have the authority to initiate disciplinary action. | Determine, with protégés, that literacy program goals have been met and that strategies are appropriate. |
| Evaluation | Assume the responsibility for assessing and appraising performance. | Help protégés to understand the performance appraisal process and to strengthen their performance, if necessary. |

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MENTOR-COACHES IN DIFFERENT ROLES

Supervisors who take on the Mentor-Coach role should do the following:

- Use the same reflective supervision techniques when supporting the protégé's early literacy and language practices as when supporting all other aspects of the protégé's performance.
- Let protégés know which role you are in when observing and meeting.
- Understand the challenges that can emerge when building trust with protégés because of your dual role as both Mentor-Coach and supervisor.
- Support the Mentor-Coach and protégé relationship, goals, and practices.
- Discuss clear guidelines with protégés about confidentiality and what, how, and with whom they will share information about the protégé.

Mentor-Coaches who have no supervisory responsibility, whether they are program employees or outside consultants, should do the following:

- Define the Mentor-Coach role and the protégé role in terms that are mutually understood.
- Ensure confidentiality in the Mentor-Coach and protégé relationship.
- Know the program's mentor-coaching goals and expected responsibilities.
- Communicate from the start with the protégé's supervisors and other staff members about the mentor-coaching goals, tasks, and responsibilities related to the Mentor-Coach's and the protégé's work together.

Are there some other considerations you would like to add? List them below:

Some Keys to Successful Mentor-Coaching for Programs

To support successful Mentor-Coach and protégé relationships and practices, as well as children’s educational outcomes, programs need to:

- Ensure that program plans, policies, and procedures are shared, understood, and are being put into practice.
- Rely on and share Early Head Start and Head Start resources for early literacy and language development.
- Provide ongoing professional development and support for staff members to apply culturally sensitive approaches in working with each other, with children, and with families.
- Regard the protégé, Mentor-Coach, and supervisor as a team.
- Maximize communication to minimize confusion.
- Define job descriptions and responsibilities for the roles of Mentor-Coaches and supervisors.
- Understand and support protégés’ roles in bringing about changes in their early learning environments
- Provide time, space, and appropriate substitute coverage so that Mentor-Coaches and protégés have time to meet and confer.

Do you have some ideas to add to this list? What are they?

Questions for Reflection

Consider the following questions and record your responses below.

1. What are some ways to convey to protégés the roles and responsibilities of Mentor-Coaches who are also supervisors?

2. What are some challenges when Mentor-Coaches are also supervisors?

3. What are some ways to address the challenges?

4. What roles and responsibilities do you want to clarify?

5. Why is it important for everyone to be clear about roles and responsibilities in Mentor-Coach and protégé relationships?

6. How will you do this?

EXERCISE 1: ANALYZING A VIGNETTE

Once you have read the vignette, answer the questions for reflection that follow.

Here is a story about Ana, a Head Start supervisor who has become a Mentor-Coach.

Ana, a longtime supervisor in an urban bilingual-Latino Early Head Start program, took the training to become a Mentor-Coach. Her program places a high value on mentor-coaching and chose Ana to be a Mentor-Coach because she is highly respected and very experienced. The toddler classroom that Ana supervises is led by two new staff members (protégés), Elias and Lori. Lori does not understand Spanish. Ana’s home language is Spanish, and the children in the toddler room are predominantly from Spanish-speaking homes.

Ana met with the two protégés, whom she also supervises, to plan a visit to their classroom as their Mentor-Coach. She let them know that she wanted to come to their classroom to do an observation in her Mentor-Coach role. They chose to have Ana conduct an observation as they introduced a new Spanish-language book during story time with the toddlers.

Ana arrived at the designated time and found the whole group gathered in a circle, with Elias leading the story and Lori in the circle, holding a child on her lap. Elias introduced the new book to the children by holding it up and exclaiming, “¡Mira que tenemos aquí!” (“Look what we have here!”). Most of the children immediately jumped up and ran toward the teacher to get a closer look at the new book.

Lori called for all of the toddlers to return to their places. When they did not respond to her wishes, she became frustrated. She lifted the child from her lap, stood up, and walked over to the easels to open the paints for the next activity.

Questions for Reflection on the Vignette

1. What are Ana's options in responding to her observation as a Mentor-Coach?

2. How should she respond and when?

3. What are some questions she could ask Elias and Lori?

4. As she thinks about this observation, what are some questions that Ana could ask herself about her what her supervisory and Mentor-Coach roles have to be? What does she need to do?

**EXERCISE 2: USING THE GUIDE FOR INTERVIEWING PROGRAM
LEADERS ABOUT MENTOR-COACH SYSTEMS**

When Mentor-Coaches and supervisors are not aware of the program’s plans, policies, and procedures to support new mentor-coaching relationships, the result can be confusing for the staff. Sometimes plans or policies are not in place yet. Or, sometimes there are some policies already in place, but they are not being used or followed.

In Exercise 2, your assignment is to conduct an introductory interview with a program director, education manager, curriculum director, or other program manager who directly oversees mentor-coaching activities.

The interview helps

- Mentor-Coaches clarify the design and plans for the Mentor-Coach and protégé relationship
- Early Head Start and Head Start program managers become more aware of the plans and needs of the Mentor-Coach and protégé as they work together in the program
- Program managers think about ways to integrate mentor-coaching into program operations
- Mentor-Coaches and protégés begin to know the program better
- Mentor-Coaches and protégés work together to establish their relationships within the program and in the surrounding community.

What are some of your ideas about why an introductory interview with program leaders is worthwhile?

Steps to Success provides you with a **Guide for Interviewing Program Leaders about Mentor-Coach Systems** to use when conducting the interview. The **Guide** is located on the next page.

Follow the four steps below when planning and completing the interview:

Step One: Read and review the **Guide for Interviewing Program Leaders about Mentor-Coach Systems**.

Step Two: Invite and arrange for a program leader to engage in a 30-minute interview with you about Early Literacy Mentor-Coaching at her or his site. Share the **Guide** with the leader or manager in advance of the interview appointment.

Step Three: Conduct the interview. Use the **Guide** as a springboard for a discussion about mentor-coaching within the program.

Step Four: At the conclusion of the interview, record some of your notes on:

1. Guideline changes for yourself, based upon what you have learned through the interview.

2. Changes in the program's system that the program manager agrees to implement.

Guide for Interviewing Program Leaders about Mentor-Coach Systems

| Discussion Topic | Questions |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Role for Early Literacy Mentor-Coach</p> | <p>Do job descriptions clearly define the roles of the supervisor and of the Mentor-Coaches? What are they? Are they in writing?</p> <p>If not, how do Mentor-Coaches learn about their role?</p> |
| <p>Communication Among the Supervisor, Mentor-Coach and Protégé, and Staff Members</p> | <p>If the Mentor-Coach is not the supervisor, is there a procedure in place for the Mentor-Coach to report to someone on the protégé's progress? If so, to whom does the Mentor-Coach report? How often?</p> <p>Does the program have a structure (e.g., coverage by appropriate substitutes) in place to facilitate conferences and meetings among the supervisor, Mentor-Coach and protégé? Please describe them.</p> <p>Do staff and parents learn about mentor-coaching plans and activities? Who shares the information? How is it shared?</p> |
| <p>Confidentiality</p> | <p>Is confidentiality well defined within the mentor-coaching relationship?</p> <p>How do you ensure that all parties know, understand, and implement the confidentiality policy?</p> |
| <p>Accountability</p> | <p>How are mentor-coaching goals established? By whom?</p> <p>Is the Mentor-Coach's work with the protégé on early literacy and language development part of the protégé's professional development plan in the program? Please explain.</p> <p>What reporting procedures are there for the non-supervising Mentor-Coach in your program?</p> |
| <p>Record Keeping</p> | <p>How do Mentor-Coaches document their work?</p> <p>Where are documents filed (e.g., protégé's personnel file, a separate mentor-coaching file?).</p> |

| Topic Discussion | Questions |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>Mentor-Coach and Protégé Selection Process</p> | <p>Who is eligible to be a Mentor-Coach?</p> <p>How are protégés selected?</p> <p>Can staff members decline an offer to become a protégé?</p> <p>Do protégés request Mentor-Coach support on a volunteer basis?</p> |
| <p>Content of the Mentor-Coaching Role</p> | <p>Is there a standard set of principles and procedures that all Mentor-Coaches use to begin mentor-coaching? If so, what is it?</p> <p>Are there common tools and practices (e.g., using a specific observation instrument) for all Mentor-Coaches?</p> |
| <p>Support for Early Literacy Mentor-Coaches</p> | <p>Does the program train Mentor-Coaches? If so, what is offered?</p> <p>Is the training offered in languages other than English? If so, what languages and what is offered?</p> <p>Is there ongoing support for and training in culturally sensitive practices and working with all children and families?</p> <p>Do the program’s Mentor-Coaches meet regularly as a group? How often? If not, why?</p> <p>Is everyone in the program informed that <i>Steps for Success</i> mentor-coaching is part of your program? How?</p> |
| <p>Other Comments:</p> | |

EXERCISE 3: ASSESSING YOUR NEEDS FOR YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

In this reflection and planning exercise, use your Professional Development Plan as a guide for the following activities.

- Assess your mentor-coaching skills.
- What are your questions, issues, and/or needs as you reflect on your Professional Development Plan for Unit 1?
- Identify your next steps.

Examples of the types of questions you might ask:

1. What are your priorities in working with your protégé?
2. What do you need to know to help meet the needs of your protégé in building relationships that will lead to positive child outcomes in early literacy and language development?
3. How will you go about finding the answers?
4. When will you know that you are successful?

Congratulations on completing Unit 1!

You are now ready to proceed to Unit 2. Unit 2 begins with a self-assessment exercise that you will complete on your own.

UNIT 1 REFERENCES

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