
QUALITY PROGRAM STANDARDS FOR YOUTH MENTORING



Mentor Michigan and its Providers Council believe it is vital for Michigan's mentoring programs to operate with the highest possible quality, so the Mentor Michigan Quality Program Standards for Youth were developed. The Standards are in place in order for youth to receive the most beneficial and productive results from a mentoring relationship.

The Standards are not meant to certify or accredit mentoring programs. They provide a planning and assessment framework that raises the bar for mentoring programs. The Standards provide a basis for each program (board, staff, and other constituents) to make a conscious comparison and determination of how the Standards will best meet the needs of youth and families in their service area.

The Mentor Michigan Providers Council, a body of 20 mentoring experts from across the state, drafted the Standards from best practices developed by national, state, and local organizations. First Gentleman Daniel G. Mulhern presented the Standards and gathered feedback from mentoring professionals throughout the state at four Regional Trainings in the summer of 2005. Feedback also was gathered from mentoring programs that were unable to have representatives attend a Regional Training. The feedback was incorporated and the Standards finalized by the Mentor Michigan Providers Council in October 2005.

Standard 1: DEFINITION OF YOUTH MENTORING

The program defines mentoring as an ongoing, structured relationship with a trusted individual aimed at developing the competence and potential of the mentee. This relationship includes:

- A.** Community-based mentoring programs that provide for consistent contact between mentors and mentees for a minimum of one calendar year. Meetings must occur several times each month for a minimum of four (4) hours per month.

- B.** School-based mentoring programs that provide for weekly contact between mentors and mentees that lasts for a minimum of one academic year.
- C.** A ratio of mentees to mentors of no more than 4:1 for group mentoring, which includes a consistent relationship between the one mentor and the same four mentees.

Standard 2: RECRUITMENT PLAN

The program has a comprehensive recruitment plan for mentors and mentees. The program also has a system for timely mentor and mentee follow-up and enrollment, which includes the following:

- A.** Strategies that portray accurate expectations, eligibility, and benefits for mentors and mentees.
- B.** Year-round marketing and public relations for mentor recruitment.
- C.** Targeted outreach of mentors and mentees based on program objectives and participant needs.
- D.** Clearly stated program goals and objectives.
- E.** A written position description outlining roles and responsibilities.
- F.** Volunteer opportunities beyond mentoring available within the organization (i.e., special events, fundraising, outreach, office support, committees, etc.).

Standard 3: ELIGIBILITY SCREENING

The program screens mentors and mentees for eligibility. The screening process includes:

A. For Mentees:

1. A written application, which is reviewed by trained staff or volunteers.
2. Parent/guardian written permission.
3. A face-to-face interview between trained staff or volunteer with the youth and family is highly recommended.

B. For Mentors:

1. A written application, which is reviewed by trained staff or volunteers.
2. A face-to-face interview with trained staff or volunteer is highly recommended.
3. Reference checks (personal and professional).
4. A background check which includes:
 - a. State criminal history check by fingerprint (ideal) or name.
 - b. Driving record check and proof of insurance for mentors who will transport youth.
 - c. Sex offender registry check.
5. The following checks are strongly recommended:
 - a. Child abuse registry check.
 - b. Local criminal history check.
 - c. A federal criminal history fingerprint check.
6. Organization has a process for rescreening existing volunteers on a regular basis.
7. Suitability criteria that relate to the needs of the target mentee population and the program's statement of purpose. This could include some or all of the following: personality profile, skill identification, gender, age, language and racial requirements, level of education, career interest, motivation for volunteering and academic standing.
8. Agreement to complete training and orientation and meet program expectations.

C. If the program uses youth mentors, the following apply:

1. An application process that includes a parental consent form.
2. Face-to-face interview.
3. Reference checks of at least two personal nonrelated adults (one from school staff and one person external to school).
4. Agreement to complete training and orientation and meet program expectations.

D. Mentor and mentee applications and all relevant data are reviewed for eligibility and acceptance.

Standard 4: ORIENTATION AND TRAINING

The program provides each mentor, mentee, and parent/guardian of mentee orientation with training and support materials. Trained staff or volunteers conduct these sessions, which are held prior to the match.

A. The program orientation for mentor, mentee, and parent/guardian clearly outlines the program and includes the following information:

1. Program overview.
2. Program description.
3. Description of mentor and mentee eligibility and time commitment.
4. Program benefits and rewards.

B. The program training, which takes place in one or multiple sessions lasting a minimum of two hours, includes:

1. A summary of program policies.
2. Description of roles, responsibilities, and expectations.
3. Discussion regarding building a healthy mentoring relationship.
4. Information referral and support services (e.g., libraries, tutoring labs, parks, etc.).
5. Age-appropriate activities for mentee skill development.
6. Cross-cultural and diversity awareness training, including cultural sensitivity and appreciation.
7. Child abuse reporting and recognition, including youth safety issues.

- 8. Crisis management and problem-solving resources.
 - 9. Establishing appropriate boundaries.
 - 10. Guidelines regarding confidentiality, risk and liability management.
 - 11. Communication skills.
 - 12. Explanation of site rules, as applicable.
 - 13. Match closure procedures.
- C.** Ongoing training sessions will be provided as necessary.
 - D.** Ample opportunity for interaction with the assigned program staff also is provided.

**Standard 5:
MATCHING STRATEGY**

The program has a well-documented matching strategy. This strategy:

- A.** Is consistent with the program’s statement of purpose.
- B.** Requires that the mentor and mentee meet regularly as defined by the program expectations.
- C.** Has criteria for matches, including some or all of the following: gender, age, language requirements, availability, disabilities, youth needs, interests, preferences, life experience, and temperament.
- D.** Includes signed statements of understanding that all involved parties (e.g., mentor, mentee, parent/guardian, program) agree to the conditions of the match and the mentoring relationship.
- E.** Matches one trained mentor with no more than four youth for group mentoring.

**Standard 6:
MATCH MONITORING PROCESS**

The program maintains a process that monitors and supports mentoring matches. This process includes:

- A.** Consistent communication between staff, mentors, and mentees.
- B.** Maintenance of a confidential file containing documentation of the application, screening, staff follow-up and input on match, and mentor input on match.
- C.** Input from mentee, mentor, family, community partners, and/or others significant in the mentee’s life.

- D.** Management of grievances, boundaries, premature match closure, rematching, and interpersonal problem solving.
- E.** Providing mentors of community-based programs with appropriate health forms, emergency contacts, and permission forms.

**Standard 7:
MENTOR SUPPORT, RECOGNITION AND RETENTION**

The program supports mentoring relationships, recognizes volunteers, and has strategies for volunteer retention. These could include:

- A.** A kick-off event held on a regular basis (e.g., annually, seasonally)
- B.** Ongoing recognition, appreciation activities, and celebration.
- C.** Ongoing peer support groups for volunteers, participants, and others.
- D.** Ongoing training and development.
- E.** Reflection on relevant issues.
- F.** Relevant and timely information dissemination.
- G.** Making mentors aware of volunteer opportunities for mentors and mentees, such as Make a Difference Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, etc.
- H.** Providing networking opportunities for mentors with appropriate resource organizations.
- I.** Newsletters, annual reports, and other correspondence with mentors, mentees, supporters, and funders to share program accomplishments.
- J.** Structured activities or processes to ease anxieties that may occur at match meetings.
- K.** Social gatherings for matches.

**Standard 8:
MATCH CLOSURE**

The program has a process for effective match closure, which documents:

- A.** Exit interviews, including efforts and outcomes, between:
 1. Mentee and staff.
 2. Mentor and staff.
 3. Mentor and mentee.

- B.** Parent/guardian notification and communication, when applicable.
- C.** A clearly stated written policy describing appropriate future contacts between mentor and mentee.
- D.** Assistance in defining process for achieving personal goals for mentees.
- E.** A process for re-engaging the volunteer as a mentor or in other areas of the program.

Standard 9: PROGRAM EVALUATION

The program conducts an evaluation process, which includes both process and outcome evaluation.

- A.** The process evaluation determines the overall effectiveness of the program including tracking program activities such as mentor and mentee recruitment, screening, orientation, placement, matching system, training, support, and mentor retention.

Demographic information for mentors and mentees should be included.

- B.** Outcome evaluation measures changes in the program participants.

Outcome measures for youth should relate to positive youth development and track specific indicators such as school success, improvement in social skills, reduction in risk-taking behaviors, etc.

- C.** Based on evaluation findings, the program reflects and refines the program design and operation.
- D.** Evaluation findings are reported to key stakeholders within the program and the community.

Standard 10: ORGANIZATIONAL MANAGEMENT

The program has established organizational management practices and a prudent and reasonable rationale for staffing based on the program’s statement of purpose and goals, needs of mentors and mentees, available community resources, staff and volunteer skill level, and ability to meet the Mentor Michigan Quality Program Standards. These practices include:

- A.** Paid or volunteer staff with appropriate skills to complete necessary program functions.
- B.** Written position descriptions for all staff and volunteers.
- C.** Composition of personnel, volunteers, and program participants that reflects the diversity of the community, as appropriate for program effectiveness.

- D.** Written procedures and a fund development plan that allows for diversified resources to support and sustain the program.
- E.** Written eligibility requirements for program participants.
- F.** Registration with Mentor Michigan.
- G.** A comprehensive system for managing program information including finances, personnel records, program activity, mentor/mentee matches, and program evaluation.
- H.** A public relations and communications plan to educate the community, stakeholders, and other target markets about the need for mentoring and the value of the mentoring program. This plan includes mentor recruitment.

Standard 11: GOVERNANCE

The program has a governance structure that includes a volunteer (non-compensated) board of directors or advisory council with established governance practices. The following governance items are in place:

- A.** Board member roles and responsibilities.
- B.** A well-defined mission.
- C.** Established operating policy.
- D.** Established structure for program oversight.
- E.** A written, current strategic planning document that includes community input.
- F.** Written administrative and program policies, including risk management, confidentiality, conflict of interest, human resources, and financial management.
- G.** Liability insurances (director and officer, general, volunteer, etc.)
- H.** Adequate financial and in-kind resources.

(for more information on organizational management and governance, see Basic Infrastructure Checklist from Michigan Nonprofit Association for full listing)¹: “Basic Infrastructure Checklist” (<http://www.mnaonline.org/pdf/infrastructure.pdf>) and “Principles & Practices for Nonprofit Excellence in Michigan” (<http://www.mnaonline.org/pdf/principles.pdf>)

¹ Principles & Practices for Nonprofit Excellence in Michigan and Basic Infrastructure Checklist For registered nonprofit organizations in Michigan, Michigan Nonprofit Association, April 2005.