
ALL ABOUT MENTORING

**"A mentor is someone who sees more in you
than you would ever see in yourself."**

-Lee Brussard 1999

So, What is mentoring?

A mentor is an advisor. Someone who has experience, wisdom, and a desire to share it with others.

The purpose of mentoring

Becoming a board member can be a confusing process for most people. Mentoring helps new members of the board have access to the knowledge, skills, and supports they need to be effective participants in all board activities.

How does the board benefit from a mentorship program?

- The board benefits by having well-informed members who have the skills and supports they need to be effective participants.

Who can be a mentor?

- Any experienced member of the board can volunteer to be a mentor.
- The new board member picks his or her own mentor whenever possible. A board member may assist with this if needed.

What is the role of a board mentor?

- Mentors assist new board members by listening, advising and supporting them.
- Mentors make sure that new members' issues come to the attention of the board chair or others as appropriate.
- Mentors help the member get and understand information that is needed so the member can make informed decisions.
- Mentors help the new members learn about the board and its activities.
- Mentors help the new members develop new skills, become active and informed participants and have enriching experiences as board members.

Why would you want to be a mentor?

- Mentoring is a relationship that benefits both people through the exchange of information and experience. Sometimes a friendship develops.
- The mentor receives satisfaction from helping someone develop knowledge and skills.

What is the commitment of a mentor?

- Mentors support the new member through their first full year or until they are comfortable.
- Mentors and new members will share what's working and what's not with the board chair.

Can you have a support person and a mentor?

- Some board members may have a support person or personal care attendant employed to provide assistance.
- A support person is familiar with how to provide accommodations specifically for the board member they work for.
- The mentor provides expertise on the role of being a board member to the person and their support people.

What is the new member's role?

- New members meet with the mentor for the first year or until they are comfortable.
- New members put together an accommodation plan with their mentor that includes opportunities for learning and the supports needed to be successful.
- New members discuss issues and ideas with their mentor and consider the mentor's advice.
- Over time, new members discuss their progress in learning the issues identified in their plan.

How does mentorship work?

- The board chair or a committee recruits mentors from current board members and suggests matches. Matches are based in part on the geographic location of the mentor and the new member and personal preferences.

- When the match is made between a mentor and a new member, the mentor makes the first contact to welcome the new member.
- The mentor sets up a meeting with the new member and together they use the accommodation checklist to help them identify supports that may be needed.
- Mentors make sure the new members can get to their first board meeting and the new member orientation. Mentors attend the meeting and orientation with the new members, if possible.
- Soon after the first board meeting, the mentor and the new member review an accommodation plan and meeting schedule.
- Regularly scheduled face-to-face meetings are recommended for the first year.
- Phone calls can be an alternative when schedules and distance are a barrier.

What should the mentor and the new member cover?

- Introduce the new member to the inner workings of the board; how the Board functions; who are the current members; the current priorities; role of staff; role of officers; role of members and the culture of the organization.
- Help the new members increase their meeting skills. Help the new member learn how to prepare for meetings and discussions, how to identify opportunities to express their opinions and make suggestions, and how to deal with conflict.

- Discover the new member's needs and arrange supports. The needs of each new member are unique. It's the job of the mentor to discover those needs and provide or arrange for appropriate supports.

How do mentors support new members during meetings?

- Mentors typically sit with them during meetings and check in occasionally to see how they are doing.
- Mentors encourage them to participate and make suggestions.
- Mentors and new members exchange feedback after meetings.
- Mentors might make suggestions to the chair that could help new members participate.
- Encourage new members to raise their hand and ask questions if they don't understand.

How will progress be monitored and encouraged?

- The chairperson will check in occasionally with the mentor and new member to see how the relationship is working out and if there is anything that the board can do to increase participation of the new board member.
- The new members can talk to the chairperson if they wish to make changes in the mentor or discuss other concerns.
- At the end of the first year, the new members will be asked to evaluate what went well, what could be improved, and what is still needed.

These guidelines were adapted from: Office of Developmental Disability Services. (2003). Mentoring New Board Members. Order Information: Office of Developmental Disability Services, 2575 Bittern St. NE., Salem OR 97309 Phone: (503) 945-9774 Fax: (503) 373-7274 and TTY: (503) 945-9836.