



# EXTENSION MENTORING PROGRAM

## Desk Reference Guide



*The delicate balance of mentoring someone is not creating them in your own image, but giving them the opportunity to create themselves.*

*-Steven Spielberg*

# ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

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**Extension** refers to North Carolina Cooperative Extension, the organization that includes employees from both North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University.

**Mentee** refers to the new employee who has been hired and assigned a mentor.

**Mentor** refers to the experienced employee who provides the mentoring.

**RED(s)** refers to Regional Extension Directors with North Carolina A&T State University.

**DED(s)** refers to District Extension Directors with North Carolina State University.

**CED(s)** refers to County Extension Directors.

**EOD** refers to Extension Organizational Development.

# INTRODUCTION

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## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Extension Mentoring Program is to add an important element to the On-boarding process for your new employees where they may develop a professional, educational and personal support system through the assignment of a designated mentor. The Mentoring Program provides a formalized relationship where the new employee will:

- learn about the importance of their role in Extension and to the citizens of North Carolina;
- build a relationship with a trusted advisor so that they may be exposed to the culture, expectations and functions of Extension; and
- develop as an Extension professional with guidance from their CED, assistance from colleagues, and focused support from their Mentor.

This desk reference guide serves both the Mentor and Mentee. All Mentors and Mentees should read this manual in its entirety before meeting.

## **Definition**

Mentoring is defined as “a deliberate pairing of a more skilled or experienced person with a lesser skilled or experienced one, with the agreed-upon goal of having the lesser skilled person grow and develop specific competencies.”<sup>1</sup>

The distinction is made between role models and Mentors in that role models may never realize that they have influenced someone else. In the Extension Mentoring Program, Mentor and Mentee are entering into a specific agreement to carry out a formalized mentoring relationship that facilitates the skill development, knowledge and expertise of the new employee.

<sup>1</sup> Murray, Margo (with Marna A. Owen). Beyond the myths and magic of mentoring; How to facilitate an effective mentoring program. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1991, p. xiv.

# MISSION, VISION, PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

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Extension exists to empower people and provide solutions. Mentors contribute to this mission by empowering their Mentees and providing them with the support and insights they need to effectively serve the citizens of North Carolina. Mentors are important in the fostering of the professional growth of their Mentees and they are integral to the Mentee's integration into their career within Extension. Therefore, the **mission** of the Extension Mentoring Program is to provide new employees with a trusted advisor during their first year of employment so that they may gain a strong understanding of Extension and learn the skills necessary to be successful in their role.

The **vision** of the Extension Mentoring Program is to establish a strong mentoring program where seasoned employees support and enhance the development of new employees so that they develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that promote their growth in Extension and as individuals.

The following five statements communicate the **philosophy** of the Extension Mentoring Program:

- Mentoring is a partnership.
- Mentoring is a supportive, professional relationship.
- Mentoring is communicating with one another effectively.
- Mentoring enhances the development of the new employee.
- Mentoring benefits the Mentee, the Mentor and the organization.

The main **goal** of the Extension Mentoring Program is to provide a professional and educational support system for new employees. This goal may be realized by the mentor achieving the following with their Mentee:

- Educating new employees about Extension's vision, mission and goals.
- Talking through the onboarding process.
- Providing new employees with a historical overview of both Extension and its role within the county or counties.
- Identifying resources and employees in the organization who may serve as a resources for new employees.
- Sharing with new employees the skills, knowledge and insights of an experienced and successful employee.
- Fostering open communication and dialogue that leads to a happier, more productive and well trained employee.
- Strengthening both the self-confidence and the leadership skills of new employees.

# MENTORING PROCESS, GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS

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The following general guidelines apply to each mentoring relationship and should be understood by both the Mentor and the Mentee:

- Mentors are selected based on the recommendations of the CEDs and the DEDs/REDs.
- Mentor/Mentee pairings are typically based on proximity and similarity of programmatic area. EOD has the primary responsibility for the oversight and administration of the Extension Mentoring Program. The CEDs of both the potential mentor and the mentee, in addition to the appropriate DEDs/REDs, approve the pairing before formal notification is made to both the Mentor and the Mentee.
- Commitment to the formal mentoring process is for one year.
- The Mentor should contact the Mentee within the first week after the assignment has been made.
- The Mentor and Mentee should meet face-to-face (in person or online via Zoom, etc.) at least once a month during the first six months of the Mentee's employment with Extension.
- Mentors and Mentees should correspond frequently, at least once every two to four weeks. Both participants need to make sure that this communication occurs on a regular, on-going basis.
- No Fault arrangement: Throughout a professional career, all employees face various challenges and changing circumstances that are often unexpected and may make it difficult to continue serving as a Mentor. This program operates with a No Fault philosophy that allows Mentors and Mentees to request changes or reassignments without fear of repercussions. Mentors and Mentees may request a change or release from their assignment by contacting EOD.
- The Mentor and the supervisor of the Mentee will communicate about the progress of the Mentee throughout the relationship.
- Both the Mentor and the Mentee will come prepared to their meetings so that their scheduled time together may be productive and effective.

# MENTOR QUALIFICATIONS, SELECTION AND TRAINING

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Mentors undoubtedly have a strong influence on a Mentee which, ultimately, will lead to an impact on the organizational system. It is therefore essential that Mentors have the following qualifications:

- commitment to the mission of Extension;
- demonstrated and effective skills in programming skills such as program development, marketing, building partnerships, and program evaluation;
- appropriate subject matter expertise;
- knowledge of the policies and procedures of North Carolina State University and/or North Carolina A&T State University, North Carolina Cooperative Extension, and county operations;
- minimum of three years of county Extension experience; and
- currently serving in a position similar to that of the new employee.

In the Mentor selection process, preferences and priority will be given to individuals who possess the following characteristics:

- team player;
- positive attitude;
- self-confident and well-skilled in their role;
- trustworthy and ethical;
- respected by peers and shows respect for others;
- listens and communicates effectively;
- patient and caring;
- recognizes and encourages excellence;
- appreciates and encourages diversity; and
- flexible and receptive to new ideas.

Selection of Mentors involves administrators within Extension. Mentors are identified by their supervisors. These names and additional information such as position, subject matter, years of employment in Extension, and county are submitted to EOD. EOD works with the DEDs/REDs and CEDs to make appropriate matches as new employees are hired. Matching occurs as close to the new employee's start date as possible.

Training of Mentors occurs once they have been selected. Mentors should complete the training before they are matched with a Mentee. In their first week of employment, Mentees receive the Mentoring Program desk reference guide as well as additional information about Extension's one year On-boarding process.

# BENEFITS

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The following is an outline of some of the general benefits of mentoring. It is important for Mentors to realize that they play an important role, not only in the success of their Mentees, but also in the overall success of Extension.

## Role

## Benefit

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### Mentor

- Enhanced personal growth and development.
- Revitalized interest in work.
- Close relationship with the new employee.
- Pride from watching the new employee develop.
- New ideas and perspectives generated.
- Positive development and promotion of Extension.
- Gives something back to the organization (time, talent, wisdom).
- Passes on knowledge to the next generation.
- Sense of accomplishment through Mentee's successes.
- Investing in Extension's future.

### Mentee

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- Supportive atmosphere.
  - Insights into all aspects of their job.
  - Development of new skills.
  - Development of confidence in their new role.
  - Knowledge of Extension and the land-grant system.
  - Insight into organizational aspects of Extension.
  - Better performance and productivity in their specialized areas.
  - Professional networking.
  - Non-evaluative feedback.
  - Opportunity to be successful.

### Organization

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- Happier employees.
  - Increases employee retention rate and reduces turnover.
  - Positive work environment and organizational climate.
  - Development of future leaders.
  - Development of new talent.
  - Continuity of organizational culture and knowledge.
  - Promotes teamwork.
  - Increases productivity and enhances performance.
  - Creates a cohesive and creative Extension system.
  - Reduces overall cost of recruiting and hiring.

# EXPECTATIONS OF A MENTOR

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Thank you for agreeing to take on the role of Mentor in North Carolina Cooperative Extension. The Mentoring Program is part of the Extension On-boarding process, and the goal of the Mentoring Program is to provide new employees with a Mentor from their area of specialization for one year. Upon receiving their assignment of a Mentee, the Mentor should initiate contact with the new employee within five days. Please know that your role as a Mentor means that you agree to devote time and energy to the mentoring relationship; the same expectation is true for the Mentee.

You were chosen as a Mentor because you exhibit a majority of these characteristics: you have extension knowledge and experience within North Carolina Cooperative Extension; you have a commitment to the mission of Extension; you have good communication skills; you have established a network of resources; and you have had experience managing individuals and groups. You are respected among your peers, your opinions are sought by others, and you are a team player. You are also open to new ideas and to supporting the future of Extension.

As a Mentor, you convey the organization's culture, traditions, values and strategies for accomplishing goals to your Mentee(s). Mentors provide non-evaluative support for newly hired employees and an open atmosphere for dialogue.

# GENERAL ROLES FOR MENTORS

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## **Communicator**

- Encourages two-way exchange of information.
- Listens to the Mentee's career concerns and responds appropriately.
- Establishes an environment for open interaction.
- Schedules uninterrupted time to meet with the Mentee.
- Acts as a sounding board for ideas and concerns.

## **Coach**

- Works with Mentees to identify and understand career-related skills, interests and values.
- Helps Mentee evaluate the appropriateness of career options.
- Helps Mentee plan strategies to achieve mutually agreed-upon personal goals.
- Helps to clarify performance goals and developmental needs.
- Teaches managerial and technical skills.
- Reinforces effective on-the-job performance.
- Clarifies and communicates organizational goals and objectives.
- Serves as a role model to demonstrate successful professional behaviors.
- Leads by example.

## **Advisor**

- Communicates the formal and informal realities of progression in Extension.
- Recommends training opportunities from which the Mentee may benefit.
- Recommends appropriate strategies for career direction.
- Reviews the Mentee's development plan on a regular basis.
- Helps the Mentee identify resources required for career progression.
- Helps the Mentee identify obstacles to career progression and take appropriate action.

## **Networker**

- Expands the Mentee's network of professional contacts.
- Helps bring together different learners who may mutually benefit by helping each other.
- Helps link the Mentee with appropriate educational opportunities.
- Identifies resources to help the Mentee with specific problems.
- Follows up to ensure that the referred resources were useful.
- Encourages Mentee to seek additional guidance and support from others in Extension.

# MENTOR CODE OF ETHICS

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In addition to the roles and responsibilities outlined for Mentors in this Manual, Mentors are also expected to adhere to the following ethical guidelines.

As a Mentor:

- I will meet with my Mentee regularly in accordance with the expectations and instructions set forth in the Extension Mentoring Program.
- I will endeavor to listen to and not lecture my Mentee.
- I will help my Mentee understand that I am a colleague on whom they may rely.
- I will serve as a positive role model for my Mentee, helping them to see the need for adherence to the expectations and responsibilities associated with being an Extension employee.
- I will not make any promises to my Mentee that I cannot keep.
- I will keep my Mentee's confidence to the extent possible without violating policies, laws or ethical principles associated with Extension, North Carolina State University and North Carolina A&T State University. I will inform my Mentee as to the limitations on my ability to keep their confidence. If there is a reason that I need to disclose anything relating to my Mentee, I will attempt to do so in a manner that is least harmful and most beneficial to my Mentee and to the Extension Mentoring Program. I know that the best way to address problems is to first discuss it with those involved, and if not resolved, then involve the supervisor(s).
- I will keep in mind my commitment to always act in the best interest of my Mentee and of the Extension Mentoring Program.
- I will assist my Mentee with attaining the knowledge and skills needed to be a responsible, productive and successful employee.
- I will avoid any impropriety, or the appearance of any impropriety, in my relationship with my Mentee and the Extension Mentoring Program.

Adapted from "Mentor Code of Ethics", [www.humdevcrt.org](http://www.humdevcrt.org), Milwaukee, WI

# RESPONSIBILITIES AND EXPECTATIONS OF A MENTEE

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It is important for the Mentee to keep in mind that your Mentor is a supportive colleague who has a desire to support and guide your Onboarding process with Extension, as well as encourage your professional growth and development. You, as the Mentee, need to plan to devote time and energy to the relationship, just as the Mentor will. Both Mentee and Mentor will benefit from the mentoring relationship. While you will be assigned one Mentor formally, we do encourage you to seek out the advice and support of others. This will help you gain further knowledge and information to make you more successful.

In order for the pairing with Mentor to be successful, you, as the Mentee, are expected to:

- Review your Mentor's biographical sketch to learn more about their background.
- Complete a biographical sketch and share it with your Mentor within the first week of your Mentor assignment (available on EOD website).
- Communicate regularly with your Mentor, demonstrating initiative in these efforts.
- Be an open and honest communicator while maintaining confidentiality; this is essential. If something concerning the Mentor or the new employee needs to be discussed with others, first discuss it within the mentoring relationship. If not resolved within the mentoring relationship, then discuss it at the next level of management.
- Understand what you want from the mentoring relationship and communicate your goals and aspirations to your Mentor.
- Understand you have as much to give to the mentoring relationship as you have to receive.
- Be willing to listen to and accept constructive feedback.
- Be open to new ideas and act on the Mentor's advice when it is applicable to your situation.
- Follow up with resources and references the Mentor shares to find answers and information.
- Respect your Mentor by keeping all scheduled appointments and practicing professional behavior and dress.
- Be flexible on meeting times and places.
- Be realistic and maintain a positive attitude.
- Understand that while you have a formal Mentor that is assigned to you, you are also encouraged to build a network within Extension.
- Express appreciation for your Mentor's efforts.
- Maintain a professional relationship with your Mentor and have appropriate boundaries.
- Pass on the gift of mentoring others!

Given the fact that the Mentor has a full-time role within Extension and that the purpose of the mentoring relationship is to provide guidance, Mentees should avoid:

- Asking that Mentor to tell you precisely what you should do or to act in your place.
- Asking advice on everything; have a purpose for each request.
- Relying on the Mentor to give or seek answers to all of your questions or requests.
- Complaining about other people or missed opportunities in an unprofessional manner.
- Committing yourself to obligations you cannot keep.
- Cancelling meetings or visits with the Mentor at the last minute.

# THE 16 LAWS OF MENTORING

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Adapted from Mentoring - A Success Guide for Mentors and Protégés  
by Floyd Wickman and Terri Sjodim, McGraw Hill, 1977.

1. The Law of Positive Environment
  - Create a positive environment where potential and motivation are released and options are discussed.
2. The Law of Development Character
  - Nurture a positive character by helping to develop not just talent, but a wealth of mental and ethical traits.
3. The Law of Independence
  - Promote autonomy; make the learner independent of you, not dependent on you.
4. The Law of Limited Responsibility
  - Be responsible to them, not for them.
5. The Law of Shared Mistakes
  - Share your failures as well as your successes.
6. The Law of Planned Objective
  - Prepare specific goals for your mentoring relationship.
7. The Law of Inspection
  - Monitor, renew, critique, and discuss potential actions. Do not just expect performance without inspection.
8. The Law of Tough Love
  - The Mentor acknowledges the need to encourage independence in the learner.
9. The Law of Small Successes
  - Use a stepping stone process to build on accomplishments and achieve great success.
10. The Law of Direction
  - It is important to teach by giving options as well as direction.
11. The Law of Risk
  - A Mentor should be aware that a learner's failure may reflect back upon him or her. A learner should realize that a Mentor's advice will not always work.

# THE 16 LAWS OF MENTORING

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## 12. The Law of Mutual Protection

- Commit to maintain privacy, protect integrity, defend character, and respect the experiences and the wisdom you have shared with each other.

## 13. The Law of Communication

- The Mentor and the learner must balance listening with delivering information.

## 14. The Law of Extended Commitment

- The mentoring relationship extends beyond the typical 8 to 5 business day, just as our roles in Extension do in our communities.

## 15. The Law of Life Transition

- As a Mentor, when you help a learner enter the next stage of their life or career, you will enter the next stage of yours.

## 16. The Law of Fun

- Making mentoring a wonderful experience - laugh, smile and enjoy the process.

# ROLE OF THE DISTRICT EXTENSION DIRECTOR AND REGIONAL EXTENSION DIRECTOR

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The role of the DED/RED is critical to the success of the mentoring relationship and to the Extension Mentoring Program as a whole. The DED/RED is involved in the following ways:

## **Matching**

- Encourages qualified employees with three or more years of experience to become Mentors.
- Works with EOD to assign Mentors to new employees.
- Contacts the Mentor's and Mentee's CEDs to confirm the Mentor's suitability for the Mentee.
- Confirms availability and willingness of the Mentor
- Once confirmed with both CEDs, the DED/RED informs EOD that the Mentor/Mentee pairing has been approved.
- EOD sends a notice of commitment to the Mentor and the Mentee with copies to the DED/RED and CED.

## **Ongoing Support**

- Supports the Onboarding process.
- May attend the introduction meeting for Mentors and Mentees.
- Encourages Mentees to seek guidance from their Mentors.
- Works with EOD in evaluating the process and facilitating requests for changes in the employee Mentor assignment.
- When appropriate, works with the Mentor and/or Mentee to resolve any concerns or address issues that are of a confidential nature.

## **Evaluation**

- Recognizes willingness of employees to serve as Mentors and works with EOD to evaluate the effectiveness of Mentors.
- Informs EOD of any concerns regarding Mentors/Mentees and works with EOD to resolve those concerns.
- Provides input on the Onboarding process for ongoing evaluations and improvement of the Extension Mentoring Program.

# ROLE OF THE COUNTY EXTENSION DIRECTOR

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The role of the CED is also critical to the success of the mentoring relationship and to the Extension Mentoring Program as a whole. The CED is involved in the following ways:

## **Matching**

- Encourages qualified employees with three or more years of experience to become Mentors.
- Provides DED/RED and EOD with suggestions for who to contact about becoming a Mentor.

## **Ongoing Support**

- Follows up with employees by including the mentoring process as a topic for discussion on the new employee checklist (Example: "How is it going with your Mentor?"; "Are you and your Mentor meeting on a regular basis?")
- Supports employees who agree to be a Mentor by allowing them time to spend with the Mentee, and understanding the Mentor's need to be out of the office more than usual to meet with their Mentee.
- Encourages employees to seek guidance from Mentors.
- Insures completion of training for Mentors and Mentees.
- When appropriate, works with the Mentor and/or Mentee to resolve any concerns or address issues that are of a confidential nature.

## **Evaluation**

- Provides input into the On-boarding process for ongoing evaluation and improvement of the program.
- Completes evaluations of the Extension Mentoring Program.
- Considers the Mentor's involvement, time and commitment to the Extension Mentoring Program when conducting the Mentor's annual performance evaluation. It is important that Mentors are acknowledged for the time and guidance they provide Mentees as this work encourages and supports both the present and future success of Extension.

# RESOURCES

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## Resources

- Extension materials reviewed and used for the creation of the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Mentoring Program and the Desk Reference Guide were from the following states: Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Kentucky, Maine, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas, and Wyoming. Additional information is from the International Mentoring Association and The Mentoring Institute.
- Murray, Margo (with Marna A. Owen). Beyond the myths and magic of mentoring; How to facilitate an effective mentoring program. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., 1991.
- Mentoring: A Practitioner's Guide, March 1995; an essay on the mentoring program at Douglas Aircraft Company.
- "Mentor Code of Ethics", [www.humdevcrt.org](http://www.humdevcrt.org), Milwaukee, WI.
- Mentoring - A Success Guide for Mentors and Protégés by Floyd Wickman and Terri Sjodim, McGraw Hill, 1977

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