Virtual Mentoring

Using technology to stay connected to youth

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Session Description

Missouri afterschool programs reach school age children each year to provide safety, learning, and skill building. These face-to-face interactions with caring adults help children build these characteristics. What do we do when our in-person interaction cannot happen? How do we continue to help them stay connected to programs designed to build social skills and hone resiliency? Consider virtual mentoring or E-Mentoring as an option to stay connected during times of distance from the children in afterschool.
Objectives

Participants will:

• Explore virtual mentoring or E-Mentoring in the afterschool setting
• Discuss methods of virtual mentoring
• Discover technology resources for E-Mentoring
• Practice tools to use in E-Mentoring
Audience

• Program directors
• Site directors
• Site staff
• Volunteers
• Teens
Who were your mentors as a child?

What was your relationship?

How often did you interact with that person?

Do you currently have a mentee?
What is virtual mentoring or E-Mentoring?

E-mentoring, also referred to as electronic mentoring, digital mentoring, online mentoring, virtual mentoring, or computer-assisted mentoring, includes any type of mentoring that incorporates a digital technology.

Source: Elements of Effective practice for Mentoring; E-Mentoring Supplement, 2019
POLL 1

• Are you using virtual contact/mentoring with the children in your program
  • Yes
  • No
  • Considering it
  • Working on it
Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring

Six Standards

1. Recruitment
2. Screening
3. Training
4. Matching & Initiating
5. Monitoring & Support
6. Closure
Standards Your Program has in place

1. Recruitment
   Hired program staff
   Volunteers
2. Screening
   Conducted by your school system or organization
3. Training
   Procedures, youth development, safety, etc.
Standards Your Organization or School may need

4. Matching & Initiating
   Matching youth with program staff
   Frequency of meetings

5. Monitoring & Support
   How to document the mentee:mentor sessions

4. Closure
   How to end or continue the relationship
POLL 2

• Which of the following is not a characteristic of virtual mentoring?
  • Permission from parents/guardians
  • Staff time needed to connect with youth
  • Choosing the frequency of mentor/mentee contact
  • Staff mentors conduct virtual mentoring from school
  • Child access to technology
  • Staff mentors are trained to have appropriate child contact
Methods of relationships in E-Mentoring

Mentee to Mentor 1:1

Group mentoring 2:4 to 2:8

Peer mentoring

Blended mentoring, virtual and face to face

Asyncronous

email

forum or bulletin board

live chat/text/direct message

Synchronous

video conferencing

commercial platform
Considerations for virtual mentoring

What ages are appropriate for virtual mentoring?

• Most virtual mentoring is for middle school, high school and young adult
• Elementary age virtual mentoring is delivered via commercial applications for security

Do youth have access to technology?

• Cell phones
• Tablets
• Computers
• Gaming systems
• Adequate internet connection or data plans
# Simple Typology of E-Mentoring Programs by Technology Used

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology Used</th>
<th>E-mail</th>
<th>Forum/Bulletin Board</th>
<th>Video Conference</th>
<th>Live Chat/Apps/ Direct Messaging</th>
<th>Proprietary MultiFeature Platform</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Common match structures</td>
<td>One-to-one</td>
<td>One-to-one, blended, or layered group matching, totally unmatched</td>
<td>One-to-one</td>
<td>One-to-one, small group</td>
<td>One-to-one</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction mode</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Asynchronous</td>
<td>Synchronous</td>
<td>Could be either (based on app)</td>
<td>Usually a combination, depending on features</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction schedule and frequency</td>
<td>Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program</td>
<td>Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program</td>
<td>Often scheduled, frequency determined by participants unless directed by program</td>
<td>Often scheduled, frequency determined by participants unless directed by program</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program observation of interactions</td>
<td>Minimal if participants use their own accounts</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Minimal (if not through proprietary platform)</td>
<td>Minimal (unless program offers app, then high)</td>
<td>High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common ages served</td>
<td>MS, HS, YA</td>
<td>MS, HS, YA</td>
<td>HS, YA</td>
<td>MS, HS, YA</td>
<td>K-5, MS, HS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common settings for engaging with the technology</td>
<td>Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)</td>
<td>Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)</td>
<td>Youth and mentor residences, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)</td>
<td>Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)</td>
<td>School classrooms, workplaces (for mentors), youth and mentor residences</td>
</tr>
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<td>Strengths of model</td>
<td>Easy-to-use and familiar technology, allows for longer messages and file attachments, little maintenance by program</td>
<td>Easy-to-use and familiar technology, allows for longer messages and file attachments, little maintenance by program</td>
<td>Real-time interactions and synchronous communication, putting a “live” on the match</td>
<td>Immediate, potentially 24/7 contact, mobile-friendly, and easy-to-use for youth, free (unless program develops app)</td>
<td>All features (e.g., ideas for match activities and program rules, guidelines) integrated into user experience, flexible modes of communication, tremendous potential for match monitoring and support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges of model</td>
<td>Participants may wait for messages to be read or responded to, not ideal for quick conversations, outdated technology to youth, requires constant staff nudging of participation</td>
<td>Limited activity integration, video can exacerbate feelings of distance</td>
<td>Limited message length in some apps, not ideal for in-depth sharing of complex feelings or thoughts; limited ability to share files/resources; data plans may incur monetary costs, messages may not be encrypted</td>
<td>Expensive to develop and maintain, lots of staff oversight and platform management, need to train participants, daunting for new adopters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common program examples</td>
<td>Program pairing youth with health challenges with adult mentors who have experience with similar challenges to exchange messages of support and perseverance</td>
<td>Program for youth of color exploring STEM careers, where they can interact with many STEM professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnicities</td>
<td>Program providing personalized support to isolated youth who are experiencing mental health challenges and suicidal ideation</td>
<td>Program to support youth during the college application process using frequent check-ins and reminders to take care of specific tasks</td>
<td>Classroom-based program for youth engaged in skill-building and project-based learning paired with subject matter experts from local companies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Technology to use for virtual mentoring

**Phone Calls**
1:1 interaction
Smart phones often have conferencing options.

**Texting**
School provided texting services
Individual texting from personal phone

**Social media**
Facebook
Instagram

**Commercial E-Mentoring Platforms**
iMentor
Sea Change Mentoring
iCloudBe (age 13 and older)
Summarized tips for E-Mentoring using texts

1. Know the strengths and weaknesses of the communication tool you are using.
2. Put a lot of effort into the first few messages you send your mentee.
3. Respond quickly, but not too quickly.
4. Take the uncertainty out of text communication frequency by scheduling it.

POLL 3

• What is your biggest concern about virtual mentoring with children?
  • Permission from parents/guardians
  • Staff time needed to connect with youth
  • Choosing the frequency of mentor/mentee contact
  • Child access to technology
  • Staff mentors are trained to have appropriate child contact
  • Other
Back to Back Drawing

Honing communication skills supplies
- Pen or pencil
- Full sheet of paper
- Video or camera

You will be given a set of verbal instructions on how to draw a picture.
Back to Back Drawing

• What was the easiest thing about this activity?
• What could be some barriers in E-Mentoring?
• How can this help us hone our communication skills?
• How is this activity like other areas of our lives?
Virtual mentoring needs to have boundaries.

This activity uses scenarios to discuss situations that may arise within the mentoring relationship involving digital communication and social networking, such as Facebook or Twitter.
| Your mentee is spending all of his or her time with you on the phone texting other people. | Your mentee is sending friend requests to your family members and friends. |
| Your mentee forwards you a text message that is spreading a rumor. | Your mentee wants to have your cell phone number. |
| Your mentee’s parent or guardian “friends” you on a social networking site. | Your mentee’s parent or guardian is constantly writing on your wall or sending you messages. |
Questions?
Resources

National Mentoring Resource Center OJJDP
https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/

Mentor: The National Mentoring Partnership
https://www.mentoring.org/
https://www.mentoring.org/coronavirus-resources/

Ready to Go: Mentor Training Toolkit, Michigan State University Extension 4-H
https://www.canr.msu.edu/youth_mentoring/