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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



Photo courtesy of First Niagara



4TH EDITION

Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™

RESEARCH-INFORMED AND PRACTITIONER-APPROVED BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING AND SUSTAINING IMPACTFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS AND STRONG PROGRAM SERVICES

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**

Asynchronous

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

Technology Used	E-mail	Forum/Bulletin Board	Video Conference	Live Chat/Text App/ Direct Messaging	Proprietary Multifeature Platform
Common match structures	One-to-one	One-to-one, blended, or layered group matching, totally unmatched	One-to-one	One-to-one, small group	One-to-one
Interaction mode	Asynchronous	Asynchronous	Synchronous	Could be either (based on app)	Usually a combination, depending on features
Interaction schedule and frequency	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Often scheduled, frequency determined by participants unless directed by program	Unscheduled, frequency up to participants unless directed by program	Often scheduled, frequency often determined by program and use of curriculum
Program observation of interactions	Minimal (if participants use their own accounts)	High	Minimal (if not through proprietary platform)	Minimal (unless program offers app, then high)	High
Common ages served	MS, HS, YA	MS, HS, YA	HS, YA	MS, HS, YA	K-5, MS, HS
Common settings for engaging with the technology	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Youth and mentor residences, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	Community, youth homes, workplaces (for mentors), schools (program controlled)	School classrooms, workplaces (for mentors), youth and mentor residences
Strengths of model	Easy-to-use and familiar technology, allows for longer messages and file attachments, little tech maintenance by program	Thematic sorting of messages, ability to create subgroups, simple to use, potential access to many mentors, easy tracking of participation	Real-time interactions and synchronous conversation, putting a "face" on the match	Immediate, potentially 24/7 contact, mobile-friendly and easy-to-use for youth, free (unless program develops app)	All features (e.g., ideas for match activities and program rules/guidance) integrated into user experience, flexible modes of communication, tremendous potential for match monitoring and support
Challenges of model	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	Access to many mentors may overwhelm individualized support, participants may need reminders to log in and participate, moderation by staff is needed	Limited activity integration, video can exacerbate feelings of distance	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 can incur monetary costs; messages may not be encrypted	Expensive to develop and maintain, lots of staff oversight and platform management, need to train participants, daunting for new adopters
Common program examples	Program pairing youth with health challenges with adult mentors who have experience with similar challenges to exchange messages of support and perseverance	Program for youth of color exploring STEM careers where they can interact with many STEM professionals from a wide variety of backgrounds and ethnicities	Program providing personalized support to isolated youth who are experiencing mental health challenges and suicidal ideation	Program to support youth during the college application process using frequent check-ins and reminders to take care of specific steps	Classroom-based program for youth engaged in skill-building and project-based learning paired with subject matter experts from local companies

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

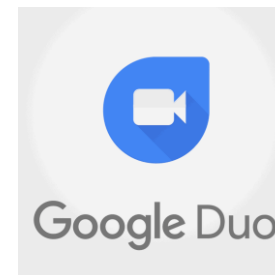
Instagram

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.

Source: Mentoring.org <https://www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Tips-for-Mentors-Shifting-to-Text-Based-Communication.pdf>

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

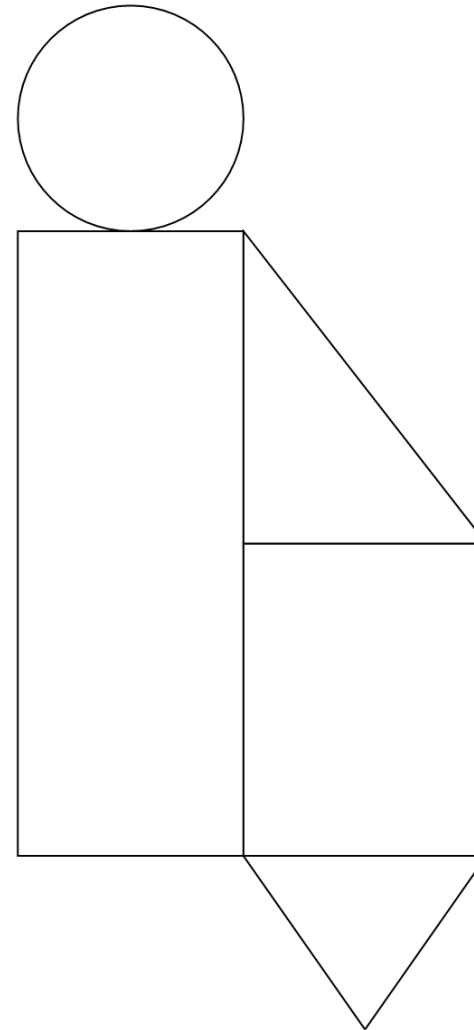
- Pen or pencil
- Full sheet of paper
- Video or camera

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?









Digital Communication 101

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.

Communication



<p>Your mentee is spending all of his or her time with you on the phone texting other people.</p> 	<p>Your mentee is sending friend requests to your family members and friends.</p> 
<p>Your mentee forwards you a text message that is spreading a rumor.</p> 	<p>Your mentee wants to have your cell phone number.</p> 
<p>Your mentee's parent or guardian "friends" you on a social networking site.</p> 	<p>Your mentee's parent or guardian is constantly writing on your wall or sending you messages.</p> 



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/>

[https://www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Final Elements Publication Fourth.pdf](https://www.mentoring.org/new-site/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Final_Elements_Publication_Fourth.pdf)

Ready to Go: Mentor Training Toolkit, Michigan State University Extension 4-H

https://www.canr.msu.edu/youth_mentoring/



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