

Examples of Mentoring Programs

Goals and Objectives of a Mentoring Program

1. To support the association, a mentorship program provides avenues to accomplish the following goals:
 - A. Develop members and help them grow as officials,
 - B. Produce effective officials through the development and use of effective mentors,
 - C. Build connections and relationships between members and the association,
 - D. Provide opportunities for new members to feel welcome while involving experienced officials, and
 - E. Promote the retention of officials.
2. Official mentoring is vitally important to the association. It helps the association retain referees. Effective officials and mentors are indispensable if the association is to grow and prosper.
3. Effective mentors are indispensable if the association's core of officials is to continue to grow. The effectiveness of mentors has a tremendous impact on members and ultimately the overall success of the association.
4. Mentoring helps new officials quickly become capable and confident as well as helping experienced officials advance. A mentorship program allows experienced officials new opportunities to continue their involvement with the association.
5. Mentoring builds both confidence and competence in mentees by allowing them to build upon their knowledge and skills more quickly than if they were learning solely on their own.
6. Mentoring is an effective tool for helping association members advance.
7. Experienced officials who already officiate at a higher level or wish to continue giving back to the sport and association can mentor officials and pass along their knowledge and experience.
8. Mentoring nurtures professional relationships between members which helps officials feel welcome and connected to the association.

Mentorship Program Structures

Mentor programs can be structured and administered in several ways. Associations should have input into how their mentoring program is set up and structured. Once established, the way in which the mentoring program is administered can vary. The key is to have support from the association to implement, administer, and maintain the mentorship program. An individual or a group of people can help administer the association's mentorship program to provide support of the program's goals and objectives and to be responsible for the program. Regarding program oversight, some options include:

1. Designate an existing association executive board member to be solely responsible for the mentorship program by overseeing its implementation and administration.
2. Create a new officer or program administrator that is responsible for the mentorship program who operates under the supervision of the association's executive board or committee. This individual could be an executive board member, an experienced official, or a member with interest in supporting the mentoring program.
3. Delegate a committee to run and administer the mentorship program. With a committee structure, oversight can be delegated to committee members to share the workload of the mentoring program's operation.

The structure of the mentorship program depends on several factors: the size of the association, the needs and desires of the membership, the number and availability of mentors, and the desired outcomes established by the association. Some examples of how a mentorship program can be structured include:

1. One-On-One:
 - A. A one-on-one model pairs two officials together. One mentor is paired with one mentee.
 - B. This model allows for individualized attention and focus from one mentor to one mentee.
 - C. This requires many mentors. Typically, the number of mentees is higher than the number of available mentors.

2. One-To-Many:
 - A. In a one-to-many model, a mentor is paired with multiple mentees.
 - B. This model allows for discussions and learning to take place in small groups. These groups can be diverse with newer and experienced officials or the group can be alike in mentee's rank or experience.
 - C. This requires a few mentors. Multiple officials can be assigned to a single mentor.
3. Hybrid:
 - A. In a hybrid model, the structure of the mentorship program is a combination or amalgamation of one-on-one or one-to-many models with changes to reflect the needs of the association.
 - B. Models should be considered that best suit the availability of mentors and mentees.

Roles that Mentors Play

As John C. Crosby once said, "Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction." The mentor acts as a helping hand for new and developing officials; they play many important roles in the development of officials:

1. As friend, the mentor must be persuasive in their comments to the mentee. The official must trust the motives as well as the judgment of the mentor and believe that the mentor gives freely of time and effort.
2. As observer, the mentor must provide sound, simple advice and assistance that leads the mentee on the shortest path to success. The mentee must believe in the sincerity and credibility of the assistance given.
3. As supporter, the mentor offers encouragement in unlimited supply. In this view, the official can do no wrong, but can always be encouraged to do better. This is unconditional support for the person, not for everything the person does.
4. As advocate, the mentor is obligated to take the part of the official in all encounters. No criticism or dissent can go unchecked; no party can challenge without the proactive, positive involvement of the mentor.
5. As choreographer, the mentor helps the new and developing official to stage the officiating process. From the opening – arrival and pre-contest – to the closing – the post-game ceremony and bookkeeping – the mentor helps the official to move with purpose and direction from one part of the process to the next. The mentor also encourages and assists the official in understanding and moving through association policies and procedures.
6. As advisor, the mentor provides accurate, factual information that gives the mentee additional insight and understanding.
7. As coach, the mentor offers tactical instructions that help the official to operate at the top of their game and provides the official with practical suggestions to improve performance.
8. As role model, the mentor gives the developing official a real person to emulate. The mentor's attitudes, values, and behaviors set the example that the mentee is likely to follow.

Mentor Qualifications

Although any experienced official can be a candidate for becoming a mentor, mentors should have some or all of the following sample qualifications:

1. Be committed to the association and the philosophies of officiating.
2. Be willing to devote time and energy to the mentor program.
3. Have clear and concise verbal communication skills.
4. Learn to properly observe an official's performance.
5. Have a positive attitude in presenting information.
6. Develop an aptitude for listening and responding to an official's questions and concerns.
7. Encourage officials and understand an official's shortcomings.
8. Serve as a role model to other officials and mentors.
9. Have a strong understanding and grasp of association governance, guidelines, and operations.

Guidelines for Mentoring

When mentoring, mentors should remember these guidelines:

1. Act as a mentor in all of the roles expected of a mentor.
2. Always present a positive attitude toward officiating and toward the association.
3. Create a safe, positive environment for improvement.
4. Be available as often as needed to provide support and answer questions.
5. Observe the official as often as needed.
6. Encourage the official to continue advancement and/or certification to higher levels of officiating.
7. As availability and policy permit, try to arrange where you as the mentor and the official you're mentoring can be assigned to the same contest.
8. Participate with the official in continuing training and social activities offered by the association.
9. Seek help from others to ensure that the needs of the official are met.
10. Report to the mentoring program administrator any special needs or problems that should be addressed for the mentee or the mentorship program overall.
11. Actively recruit others to become officials and mentors.
12. Support the official at any contest you observe. This includes positive comments to coaches, spectators, and players or refraining altogether from making comments regarding your mentee's performance.
13. Provide positive feedback to the official after all observations:
 - A. Make at least two or three positive comments.
 - B. Identify no more than two areas for improvement by the official.
 - C. Be specific in all comments made to the official using experience or specific examples of performance.
 - D. Give small, attainable, immediately improvable goals for the official.
 - E. Use positive language such as:
 - i. "You might consider trying..."
 - ii. "Other officials often find that..."
 - iii. "From my experience..."
 - iv. "It may be easier for you if you..."
 - F. Avoid phrases such as:
 - i. "You should..."
 - ii. "I always..."
 - iii. "Never..."
 - iv. "Always..."
 - G. End discussions of observations with a positive comment.
 - H. Encourage the official at all times.