

## MENTORING NEEDS FOR EXTENSION PROFESSIONALS

The classic belief about mentoring is that a younger person is guided in all aspects of life by an older, wiser person. In the business world, a mentor is usually a senior organization person who guides the mentee's career. A mentor acts as a positive catalyst, enhancing the organization's training program. As mentee, the person may be attracted to, admired by or inspired by a mentor. The mentor takes action on behalf of the mentee by giving advice and showing the mentee the ropes, so to speak, plus displaying a supportive attitude toward the mentee. A mentoring relationship occurs in a learning context and is a continuing one-to-one trusting relationship between a more mature and/or more experienced individual and a learner and/or less experienced individual.

An important aspect for new Extension professional staff would be to have a mentor to look to, ask questions, and share problems or frustrations. Behaviors that Extension mentors perform include teaching, guiding, advising, counseling, sponsoring, role modeling, encouraging, challenging, validating, motivating, protecting and communicating.

Outcomes in formal mentoring programs as described in the literature include: 1) Increased skill level of employees; 2) Increased productivity of employees; 3) Reduction of employee turnover; 4) Reinforcement of staff development activities, and 5) Reduced stress of socialization inherent to new employees.

A mentoring model (see Figure 1) that has potential for Extension was presented by Schatz and Darling in the Journal of American Dietetic Association, April 4, 1991. They identified inputs, outputs, and transformation processes. The model takes into account the need for serial mentoring and emphasizes that the individual person remains in charge of her or his own mentoring. The mentoring model 1) encourages a person to manage their own mentoring; 2) provides the tools and resources to identify mentoring needs and processes, and 3) determines when mentoring is needed, what form of mentoring is desirable, and how to proceed. Proposed objectives for an Extension mentor relationship should include:

- \* Providing an open non-threatening atmosphere for dialogue.
- \* Providing motivation for job performance and creativity.
- \* Reinforcing acceptance of responsibility with confidence.
- \* Encouraging new agents to improve themselves professionally.
- \* Enhancing the agent's concept of the total program of Extension.
- \* Expanding the agent's subject matter competencies.
- \* Socializing the new staff member more rapidly and smoothly into the Cooperative Extension System.

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### The Mentoring Self Management Program Model

<b>INPUTS</b>	<b>TRANSFORMATION PROCESS</b>	<b>OUTPUTS</b>
<p><u>Goals:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Management of own mentoring</li><li>*Provision of tools and resources to enable self-mentoring</li><li>*Identification of mentoring needs/career goals</li></ul>	<p>The program coordinator uses:</p> <p><b>Coordination</b> Planning, implementing, assigning, evaluating, adjusting the program</p> <p><b>Education</b> Workshops to establish goals, explain the mentoring process, teach skills and techniques for mentoring, identify resources</p> <p><b>Connection</b> Networking and mentor/mentee linkages</p> <p><b>Communication</b> Follow-up workshops and bimonthly teleconferences.</p>	<p>Ability to direct own career</p> <p>Career satisfaction</p> <p>Benefits to profession</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Retention</li><li>• Diversification</li><li>• Use of talents</li></ul>
<p><u>Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>*Human: coordinator, peers, mentors, mentees, community leaders</li><li>*Capital: salary of coordinator, office costs</li><li>*Technological: equipment for conferencing, literature</li></ul>		