

# Mentoring Program Handbook

For  
Mentors  
and  
Protégés

# Mentoring Program Handbook

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## **GOALS**

1. To support the new staff member in understanding Virginia Cooperative Extension's mission, vision, values and goals.
2. To share the skills and knowledge of successful Extension professionals with new employees.
3. To provide support in locating and accessing Extension resources and resource persons.
4. To foster open communication and dialogue.
5. To provide motivation for job performance, creativity, and the acceptance of responsibility with confidence.
6. To bring employees together to establish a network of professionals within the organization.

The Virginia Cooperative Extension Mentoring Program is designed to provide a professional, educational and personal support system for the new employee.

When the mentoring program goals are met the new employee should experience an easier transition into their position with Virginia Cooperative Extension and earlier productivity.

## **Mentoring Program Overview\***

A review of literature and personal interviews with mentoring program administrators indicate that mentoring is more successful when:

- Supervisors select the mentors
- Mentors are provided training
- Mentors are successful employees who are supportive of the organization
- Mentors initiate contact early
- Face-to-face meetings, initiated by the mentor, occur within the first month of the new staff member's employment
- Regular structured interaction takes place
- Mentors and protégés have similar program responsibilities
- Mentors are willing to share both organizational and program knowledge
- Mentor and protégé have regular communication
- Confidentiality is maintained
- Mentor has no supervisory role with the protégé
- Mentor or protégé can request re-assignment without blame being assigned
- Goals and expectations for the relationship are mutually set
- formal part of the organization's operating structure
- Mentor and protégé clearly understand their roles and responsibilities
- The relationship is not overly burdened by distance or time
- Mentors and protégés are able to establish a friendship
- Extension administration is supportive of the program and the program becomes a formal part of the organization's operating structure

**\* Adapted from the Mentoring Program Handbook, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension**

## Mentor Job Description

### Qualifications:

- Recommended by SPL/DD/DPL as an experienced and effective agent in your program area
- Good written and oral communication skills
- Respected by peers for strong program delivery, management, and people skills
- Positive attitude
- Trustworthy and able to maintain a confidential relationship
- Willingness and commitment to work with new agents to be successful

### Expectations:

- Volunteer to be a mentor with no stipend
- Share best program practices and information for success
- Understand the agent professional development competencies
- Familiar with the new agent professional development framework
- Willing to travel to meet with the new agent
- Return phone calls and e-mails in a timely manner
- Help identify and connect the new agent with program resources
- Encourage the new agent to shadow you, other agents, and specialists
- Advocate for VCE
- Befriend the agent and help them learn the ropes
- Keep a log of time spent with the mentor and information shared
- Introduce the agent to district and state peers
- Follow through on promises to the agent on a timely manner
- Active in and/or familiar with professional associations

### Training Requirements:

- Attend and participate in an initial required district orientation and annual updates

### Commitment:

- Agree to a minimum one year mentoring commitment
- VCE or the mentor can withdraw from the mentor relationship at anytime

- Touch base with the agent at least weekly for first three months and as needed there after
- Provide feedback to the district director as appropriate without breaching confidentiality

Accountable To:

- District Director

Benefits:

- Recognized for service to the university and VCE
- Building a friendship/partnership for a stronger VCE
- Assist with training future mentors
- Satisfaction that protégés are successful due to your guidance

## **Mentor and Protégé Responsibility to the Program**

1. Complete and send your Bio-Sketch within the first week of the new staff member's employment. Forward the sketch to the mentor/protégé.
2. Mentor shall initiate contact within the first two weeks of the staff member's employment.
3. Protégé shall complete the New Staff Needs Assessment and bring it to the first mentor/protégé meeting.
4. Mentor and protégé meet face-to-face and together set goals for future meetings - the Needs Assessment may be used as a guide.
5. Meet regularly face-to-face and/or by phone or E-mail. Be flexible in setting meeting dates but keep appointments as scheduled.
6. Mentor and protégé complete and return the 6 month and final evaluations.
7. Let the Program Leader/Supervisor know from time to time how the mentor relationship is progressing
8. Not all marriages are made in heaven and the same is true for mentor/protégé relationships. If you would like to discuss your mentoring relationship feel free to call the Program Leader/Supervisor. Concerns can be addressed and, if necessary, relationships re-built without blame being assigned.

## **Responsibilities of a Mentor**

Mentors must be willing to accept the commitment of time and energy to provide support for a new employee during their first year. A clear understanding of the mentoring process will go a long way toward assuring success. You will need to maintain support and open communication. You will also:

- Initiate contact with the protégé
- Be a good listener
- Maintain confidentiality
- Give constructive feedback
- Promote protégé creativity and skill development
- Meet at scheduled times
- Share the organization's mission, vision, values and culture
- Help the protégé to develop goals, access resources and build a professional network
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Encourage independence; not dependence
- Remember there is most often more than one way to reach a goal. Support the protégé to the best of your ability, but remember the program success or failure of the protégé is their responsibility.

### **Avoid these pitfalls:**

- Don't give advice unless asked
- Don't take responsibility for your protégé's program or duties.
- Don't allow the protégé to be "apron strings" dependent on you.
- Don't complain about your own problems.
- Don't do your protégé's work for them.

## **Responsibilities of a Protégé**

You will find that having a supportive mentoring relationship will benefit you as you learn the ins and outs of your new position. Your mentor is a support, but not your supervisor. Be receptive to what the mentor has to say and be clear in asking for assistance when you need it. Protégé responsibilities include:

- Assume personal responsibility for your professional growth.
- Listen and consider alternatives
- Maintain confidentiality
- Accept constructive feedback willingly
- Be willing to take risks, be open to new ideas
- Maintain a positive attitude
- Demonstrate initiative
- Respect your mentor's time
- Notify your mentor of problems, concerns or questions
- Remember, there is more than one way to reach a goal

### **Avoid these pitfalls:**

- Don't rely on your mentor as your only source of information.
- Don't expect your mentor to give you all of the answers - think of your mentor as suggesting alternatives.
- Don't ask your mentor to do your work for you.
- Don't cancel meetings at the last minute.

## Mentor/Protégé Biographic Sketch

\_\_\_\_\_ Mentor

\_\_\_\_\_ Protégé

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Position: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Educational Background:

Undergraduate Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Year Graduated: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate Institution: \_\_\_\_\_

Major: \_\_\_\_\_ Year Graduated: \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Training:

\_\_\_\_\_

Program/Work Experience:

Years with VCE Cooperative Extension: \_\_\_\_\_ Years in Current Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous Relevant Work Experience:

My hobbies/interests:

Family information:

Community activities:

I am excited about working with VCE because:

## Protégé Needs Assessment

Complete this Needs Assessment before the initial meeting with your mentor. Rank each activity from 1 = greatest need to discuss, down to lowest priority topic. Send it and your biographical information to your mentor before the first meeting. This is a discussion tool only, not an assessment to be used for evaluation purposes.

Activity	Rank	Date Completed
<b>Extension Organizational Structure and Culture</b>		
History of Coop Extension and Land-Grant system		
Extension structure – Local/state/federal		
VA Tech/Virginia State Partnership		
VCE Administrative structure		
Informal/unwritten rules		
Extensionese Language		
Building Relationships and Networking		
Cultural Competence/Diversity		
<b>Unit History and Local Political Structure</b>		
Unit History		
Local and regional political structure		
Planning District information		
VCE's place in local administrative structure		
Relationships with key local and state leaders		
<b>Roles, Responsibilities, and Relationships</b>		
Agent's job description, roles, responsibilities		
Indicators of Quality		
Unit Coordinator responsibilities		
UAA responsibilities		
Relationship with District Director		
Relationship with unit/area coworkers		
Understanding Other Program Areas		

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Cross-Disciplinary Unit Programming		
<b>Professionalism</b>		
Personal Conduct		
Attire and Appearance		
Objectivity		
Influence of Position		
Private Business		
Consulting		
Political Activity		
Sexual Harassment		
Leave and Time Management		
<b>Office Procedures</b>		
Daily Planning, Calendars, Sign-out Procedures		
Handling and Returning Phone Calls and Emails		
Office Staff Meetings and Conferences		
Handling Mail		
Filing Systems		
Local Fund Management		
Travel		
<b>Diversity and Inclusion</b>		
Civil Rights Laws and Regulations		
Complaint Process		
Public Notification		
All Reasonable Efforts		
Mailing Lists		
Contacts Collection and Reporting		
Accessibility		
Non-Discrimination of VCE Clubs/Organizations		
Non-Discrimination of Cooperating Organizations		

Activity	Rank	Date Completed
<b>Communications</b>		
Writing newsletters		
Interacting with media		
Radio/TV presentation skills		
Presentation Skills		
Interpersonal skills		
Managing conflict		
Computer skills/web site development		
<b>Extension Programming Process</b>		
Understanding Situation Analysis		
Needs assessment strategies		
Designing Educational Programs		
Identifying and Understanding the Target Audience		
Identifying, Acquiring and Managing Appropriate Program Area Resources		
Working with Extension Specialists		
Grants and Other Funding Sources		
Teaching Strategies		
Area Programming		
Networking with other Agencies, and Organizations		
Marketing Programs		
Program Evaluation		
Understanding and Using the Logic Model		
Writing Impact Statements		
Communicating Program Results to Clientele		
Developing Annual Personal Action Plans		
Working with advisory committees		
Working with volunteers		
<b>Professional Development, Career and Recognition</b>		
Professional Development Opportunities		

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Date Completed</b>
Pursuing Advanced Degrees		
Professional Associations		
Awards and Recognition		
Annual Performance Review Process		
Agent Promotion Process		
<b>Personal Effectiveness</b>		
Working Effectively and Time Management		
Flexibility and Maintaining a Schedule		
Balancing Personal and Professional Life		
Developing Oneself		

**Other Needs**

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**What are the most important things you would like to get from this relationship?**

**Preferred method of learning?** (i.e. self directed, auditory (listening), experiential (hands-on), shadowing/observing, etc.)

## **Suggested Guidelines for Meetings<sup>+</sup>**

### **Within the first few days Protégé starts work**

- Call the new agent to introduce yourself, welcome them, and set a date to meet face to face

### **Initial Meeting:**

- Introduce yourself. Ask questions to learn more about your protégé. The Bio-Sketch will provide some background information about each of you. Feel free to share more information about yourself.
- Check to see that the protégée has received or been pointed to important information such as: their New Agent Training Notebook, Mentor Program Handbook, VCE Intranet New Agent Professional Development website, etc. If they have not received or been directed to this information, assist them or encourage them to contact their Unit Coordinator/District Director.
- Explain your role as mentor.
- Review the list of responsibilities and pitfalls for mentors and protégés. These are listed in the Mentoring Program Handbook.
- Identify best times to make contact and preferred contact methods (phone, Email, etc.).
- Use the Needs Assessment completed by the protégé to outline meeting topics. Mutually set goals for the mentoring relationship.
- Schedule a second face-to-face meeting within the next two to three weeks. Encourage your protégé to contact you if they have any questions or concerns before you meet again.

### **Second Meeting:**

- Check how things are going. Ask about stumbling blocks.
- Have there been surprises? What has been great? ; what has been challenging? Help the protégé by giving them ideas of resource persons they can contact to get their questions answered.
- Discuss the topics outlined for this meeting.
- Review any topics where there are questions from the VCE Intranet New Agent Professional Development website
- Encourage the protégé to continue to look at the web-based resources for new staff.

- Schedule a third meeting within 4-5 weeks. Encourage the protégé to contact you with questions or concerns. Review additional topics from the New Agent website or the Needs Assessment to be covered at the next meeting

**Third Meeting:**

- Share important up-coming events such as in-service opportunities, program area meetings, staff conferences, etc. Encourage participation as appropriate.
- Review and discuss items selected for discussion at this meeting.
- Check to see how the protégé is doing. Answer their questions or refer them to an appropriate resource.
- Ask about balancing work and family. Is the protégé concerned with being able to strike an appropriate balance? Refer them to their supervisor if needed.
- Continue to set meeting topics so meetings will be productive. Continue contact by phone, E-mail or face to face.

<sup>+</sup>Adapted From Ohio State University Cooperative Extension Mentoring Program

## Mentor Program: Suggested Activities

### Mentee:

- Visit mentor's county office
- Job shadow (accompany mentor in daily activities)
- Attend county 4-H club meetings, judging events, fairs, etc.
- Socialize with office staff to build positive relationships (lunch, birthdays, cards, notes, etc.)
- Attend Unit Leadership Council meeting with mentor
- Make home/farm/site visits with mentor
- Observe activities from all program areas
- Identify an upcoming program and ask mentor to help plan and co-teach the event.

### Mentor:

- Assist with reports/paperwork:
  - Contacts Reports
  - Personal Action Plan
  - Impact Statements
- Share record-keeping strategies
- Visit mentee's county office
- Discuss the New Agent Orientation website and review/clarify any questions
- Review resources (most useful Web sites, publications, CDs and other resources)
- Host mentee at unit and district meetings, conferences and in-services
- Introduce mentee at professional association meetings
- Share educational programming ideas
- Prepare an educational program together; team teach
- Introduce new staff to specialists and potential subject matter mentors
- Share how to handle difficult situations with clients. Use Case Studies as examples

## Suggested Framework for Mentoring Process

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Faculty/Staff Member</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>When new agent position is advertised</b>	District Director	Selects Mentor Agent
<b>Before new Agent is hired</b>	New Mentor Agent	Participates in Mentoring Training
<b>When new agent start date is determined</b>	District Director	Shares start date with Mentor for planning purposes
<b>New Agent's first day on the job</b>	Mentor	The mentor contacts the protégé to welcome him/her to the Extension organization. Set up date for first face-to-face visit.
<b>Within first week on the job</b>	Mentor and Protégé	Share Bio-Sketches before first face-to-face meeting
<b>Within first two weeks</b>	Protégé	Protégé completes the New Agent Needs Assessment, and the Core Competencies Assessment before the first meeting.
<b>Within first two weeks</b>	Mentor and Protégé	First Face-to-face meeting is held. See "Suggested Guidelines for Meetings" for more details. Set goals.
<b>First month of employment</b>	Mentor	Protégés value opportunity for frequent contact from Mentors by phone or e-mail. Mentor should contact the Protégé at least once each week for the first two months.

<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Faculty/Staff Member</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>First month of employment</b>	District Director	The District Director contacts the mentor and the mentee to see if the first face-to-face meeting has occurred, when the next meeting is planned, and how things are going between the mentor and the mentee.
<b>First and Second month of employment</b>	Mentor and Protégé	Consider scheduling one or more of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentee observes mentor teaching an educational lesson.</li> <li>• Mentee observes mentor facilitating a meeting.</li> <li>• Schedule visit to mentee's office.</li> <li>• Review "suggested activities."</li> </ul>
<b>Second month of employment</b>	Mentor and Protégé	Conduct second face-to-face meeting and continue to discuss major topic/need items. See "Suggested Guidelines for Meetings" for more details.
<b>Third month of employment</b>	Mentor and Protégé	Conduct third face-to-face meeting At this time take opportunity to refocus. Review mentee's calendar. Select new topic/need items for emphasis in the next three months. Review Suggested Activities for other ideas.
<b>Third, Fourth Fifth and sixth month of employment</b>	Mentor	Continue scheduled phone calls at least twice a month.
<b>Six months</b>	Mentor and Protégé	Review initial list of goals and assess progress. Visit if appropriate. Mentor and Protégé submit 6-months report to District Director.

Timeline	Faculty/Staff Member	Activity
	District Director	<p>District Director reviews 6-month report.</p> <p>District Director will determine if the mentoring relationship should continue.</p> <p>If the decision is affirmative, determine new goals for the mentor/mentee relationship.</p> <p>The District Director will determine what additional resources the mentor needs to continue the growth of the mentee.</p> <p>If the relationship should not continue, a new mentor would be assigned for an agreed upon length of time.</p>
Six to twelve months	Mentor and Protégé	<p>Continue relationship as determined by District Director or begin new one as directed.</p> <p>As appropriate, review or create Protégé Personal Action Plan.</p> <p>The goal is, in the final six months of mentorship, to assist protégé in the planning and completion of an example impact statement to be included with final mentor report.</p>
One year	Complete final progress report and submit to District Director	<p>The formal mentoring process is finished. The District Director will contact the mentor and the new faculty member to follow up on the mentoring process.</p> <p>Continued informal mentoring is encouraged. As the relationship evolves to a colleague status.</p>

## **CASE STUDY #1**

You are feeling overworked. Your county fair is next week and the work ahead of you is overwhelming. Everyone is running around trying to "fight fires" that seem to pop up everywhere. You know you will have to stay late to get caught up.

Although you have support staff in the office, the administrative assistant must leave early every day before 5:00 PM to pick up her daughter at day care; she is unable to stay late on any evening. You know she has worked through her lunch hour on several occasions, but you are still feeling annoyed that she is leaving.

All of the program staff in the office also work long hours. You have been employed in the County for 5 months and up to now you have enjoyed working with this group; but today you could just SCREAM! You are tired, angry and never want to hear about a county fair again.

You call your mentor.

## **CASE STUDY #2**

You are a new Extension Educator with three months on the job. There had not been a previous Educator in the role for almost a year. Old mail had been stacked and was waiting for you. Old phone messages were still on those pink slips supposedly waiting for call backs. There is no apparent filing system; you have been unable to find a way to retrieve information when you needed it and you have not been able to figure out the best way to deal with all of the mail you have gone through.

You know other Educators have filing systems that allow them to retrieve information whenever you have asked questions of them, but you can't figure out how to do it. You feel that filing should be a simple matter, and are confused by the amount of difficulty you have had in managing access to information. What is the best way to handle this? Can you get control over all of the "stuff" that comes across your desk?

You call your mentor.

### **CASE STUDY #3**

You give up! When you joined this office as a new Extension Educator, everyone had been welcoming and interested in helping you succeed. They would schedule time with you, offer advice, and share their opinions about the current status of Extension within the office, and in Durham. As time has passed, you realize that there are very strong personality conflicts going on among the staff. People are rubbing each other the wrong way, or avoiding each other completely.

Their attention to you has shifted into an effort to try to bring you over to one side or the other. You are feeling caught in the middle of a problem that is infecting the entire office staff. You're beginning to realize that quality of work is being affected by this issue as well, and support staff are divided in their loyalties too.

You do not want to take sides in this division of staff, you just want to do the best job that you can and find a way to work with everyone. However, you are beginning to question if your role with the COA or County Council Chair will be affected. How can you enjoy the job when all of this “personality stuff” is hanging in the air?

You call your mentor.



**FINAL EVALUATION**  
**Virginia Cooperative Extension**  
**Mentoring Program**

(To Be Completed by Mentor and Protégé separately)

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mentor:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Protégé:** \_\_\_\_\_

Your evaluation of the Mentoring Program will be kept confidential. Your responses will be used solely for the purpose of improving the program.

1. Briefly describe your mentor/protégé experience and the effectiveness of the relationship.

2. What was most helpful in developing the mentor/protégé relationship?

3. What did you perceive as barriers to the development of a successful mentor/protégé relationship?

4. In what ways did the mentoring relationship help you to succeed in your role with Virginia Cooperative Extension?

5. How would you improve the Virginia Cooperative Extension Mentoring Program?

6. Do you feel your mentor/protégé was committed to the mentoring relationship?

Send to Protégé's District Director and VCE Director of Professional Development

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