

Enhanced Practice: Initial Match Meeting

Overview

This details a strength-based approach to the initial introduction of the parties being paired. This in-person meeting generally includes the mentor, mentee, and parent/caregivers as well as the program staff guiding the process. This approach integrates a positive youth development (PYD) framework to the initial match meeting by providing additional questions and insights for staff to consider that begins the relationship with a strength-based context.

Key Components

Upon enrollment in the program, staff should engage each of the parties in a conversation about their respective strengths, assets, and interests. This conversation helps each person to intentionally consider each of these and reflect on how their strengths and interests might be considered as the mentoring relationship develops. During the initial match meeting, or the “match introduction” meeting, staff guides the conversation to include the following topics:

1. The role of the parent or guardian is discussed which includes the parent(s) or guardian(s) **strengths and dreams for their child**, identification of **at least one strength their child has**, and ways they can best **support the mentoring relationship**.
2. The role of the mentee is discussed, which includes the **youth identifying their strengths and interests**, and what they would **like from the mentoring relationship**.
3. The role of the mentor is discussed, which includes the **mentor identifying their strengths, motivation and interest in mentoring**, and how they can **support the youth in achieving their dreams**.

From these conversations, the mentee and mentor, with the support of staff, **develops a few goals the match can work toward**. These goals relate to strengths identified, and the dreams and aspirations discussed. The goals are revisited during match support conversations and help the match in determining appropriate and developmental activities they will share together, including participating in community events and community service activities.

Discussing strengths and interests is not a common experience and many people may struggle with how to begin this conversation. Staff might remind them about some of the ideas that were shared during the enrollment conversation to help them feel a bit more comfortable. The goals discussed might be simple, such as “have fun outside”, or a bit more specific, such as “read better.” Either way, they provide a starting point for a conversation about what they hope for their time together. Staff may want to reframe goals with a more deficit focus to its positive counterpoint. For example, “he needs to stop fighting” might be “learn how to solve problems kindly” or “learn strategies for managing anger.” Prior to closing the meeting, the group discusses days and times that will work best for the pair to meet, where they will meet (ex: mentor pick child up at the house), and the best way to communicate with one another. When possible, a plan for the first meeting is made.