



## **Career Internship Network Publications**

Career Internship Network (CIN), a program of the Youth Development Institute, comprises more than thirty New York City institutions with established internship programs for adolescents that provide exposure to, understanding of, and experiences in potential careers. As part of its services, CIN provides professional development workshops for members who run the career development programs. Resource guides and worksheets accompany each workshop to assist program coordinators in their work with interns. This downloadable publication is part of a series adapted from these workshop materials that we want to share with the field. We encourage you to use any of the materials, but please include copyright information on related pages.

## **Mentors and Youth**

Mentors (whom you might call supervisors) play a critical role in the quality of a youth's internship experience. Just think back to the impact someone special likely played in your life and possibly career. Career development internship programs use mentors in different ways and for different amounts of time, however, their importance cannot be overrated.

Research<sup>1</sup> provides an informative context for the impact mentors can make, particularly about the need for sustained involvement and continuity in relationships between mentors and mentees. Students in longer-lasting mentoring relationships have better outcomes. Research shows that relationships lasting more than twelve months, mentees felt more confident about doing their schoolwork, skipped fewer school days, and had, to a limited extent higher grades. Importantly, relationships under three months may actually harm children because they may reinforce students' fears and doubts about whether others will accept and support them. The importance of continuity of a caring non-familial adult is a factor to address when structuring your internship program. Research indicates as well that training mentors and supporting them is central to high quality mentoring relationships.

## **Mentor Training**

This document addresses the process of preparing mentors to work with interns. The first section presents material that you as the facilitator of the training might not ordinarily cover with mentors during orientation. For instance, there is a section on presenting the major concepts of youth development, which can help the mentor enrich her or his relationship to the intern. It also examines how to develop a plan for meaningful and relevant work for which interns are held accountable. The second section contains individual handouts that you can use during the mentor training session with participants.

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<sup>1</sup> From a report funded by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation, *Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis*. Susan Jekielek, MA, Drisin A. Moore, Ph. D, and Elizabeth C. Hair, Ph.D. Child Trends: Washington, DC January 2002.

**Section One  
Facilitator’s Manual**

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## WHAT MAKES A GOOD MENTOR?

Many people feel that being a mentor requires special skills, but mentors are simply people who have the qualities of good role models.

Mentors listen.	They maintain eye contact and give mentees their full attention.
Mentors guide.	Mentors are there to help their mentees find life direction, never to push them.
Mentors are practical.	They give insights about keeping on task and setting goals and priorities.
Mentors educate.	Mentors educate about life and their own careers.
Mentors provide insight.	Mentors use their personal experience to help their mentees avoid mistakes and learn from good decisions.
Mentors are accessible and provide sustained relationships.	Mentors are available as a resource and a sounding board. Mentors remain reliable resources for students throughout and after they complete the internship.
Mentors criticize constructively.	When necessary, mentors point out areas that need improvement, always focusing on the mentee's behavior, never his/her character.
Mentors are supportive.	No matter how painful the mentee's experience, mentors continue to encourage them to learn and improve.
Mentors are specific.	Mentors give specific advice on what was done well or could be corrected, what was achieved and the benefits of various actions.
Mentors care.	Mentors care about their mentees' progress in school and career planning, as well as their personal development.
Mentors succeed.	Mentors not only are successful themselves, but they also foster success in others.
Mentors are admirable.	Mentors are usually well respected in their organizations and in the community.

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Courtesy of The Connecticut Mentoring Partnership and the Business and Legal Reports, Inc. — *Best Practices in HR*, Issue 653, September 30, 1999.

## Features of Positive Developmental Settings for Young People

This table is adapted from: "Community Programs to Promote Youth Development,' The National Science Foundation, Insitute of Medicine. It was prepared by the Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth: Jacquelynne Eccles and Jenifer Appleton Goopdman, Editros. National Academy Press, Washington, DC. 2002

**The table describes key guiding youth development principles that can be applied to help structure and/or assess program and work settings in mentoring programs as well as in other programs that work with youth.**

	<b>Descriptors</b>
Physical and Psychological Safety	The workplace and program are experienced as safe and secure, both physically and psychologically. Interactions between youth and adults and among youth are constructive. There is training to support constructive interactions.
Clear and High Expectations	Young people and adults are expected to perform well and hold themselves to high standards of behavior. Agreement is developed within the program and among mentors about expectations and communicated to all. Young people know how they are doing and have opportunities to advance or improve.
Appropriate Structure and Continuity	The work and the program setting have explicit rules and guidelines, but also opportunities for youth input to these. There is limit setting; firm-enough control; continuity and predictability in relationships; clear boundaries; and age-appropriate monitoring. There is also continuity of relationships between youth and adults.
Caring and trusting relationships with adults	Between adults and youth, and among youth, there is opportunity for and expression of warmth; caring; connectedness; good communication; support; guidance; secure attachment; and responsiveness. Each young person has at least one caring adult relationship.
Opportunities to belong	There are opportunities for meaningful inclusion of young people regardless of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disabilities;
Engaging activities	Activities are designed to be interesting to young people and make them want to commit themselves to the work of the program.
Opportunities for youth participation and voice	Young people have opportunities to help shape the program. There are formal structures to support youth voice as well as transparency in the way things are run to enable everyone to understand how to access decision-making. There are opportunities to make a difference to others through service or other activities.
Opportunities for skill building.	There are opportunities to learn physical, intellectual, psychological, emotional, and social skills and good habits of mind; preparation for adult employment; and opportunities to develop social and cultural skills. Learning opportunities are scaffolded to address different levels of student readiness.

Updated July 17, 2007

# Factors that Foster Resiliency Planning Sheet<sup>2</sup>

In the left-hand column list ways your program already reflects the particular resiliency factor. In the right-hand column, think of ways you can expand and deepen this.

<b>EXISTING</b>	<b>PLANNED</b>
<b>Caring and Trusting Relationships</b>	
<b>Engaging Activities</b>	
<b>High Expectations</b>	
<b>Opportunities for Contribution</b>	
<b>Continuity</b>	

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Advancing Youth Development Curriculum  
Youth Development Institute.  
Source: Center for Youth Development and Policy Research

## Developmental Characteristics<sup>3</sup>

### COGNITIVE<sup>4</sup> GROWTH

(intellect<sup>5</sup>)

#### What Youth Are Thinking About

Increased:

- interest in and ability to criticize opinions, suggestions, and actions of others, particularly adults
- awareness of moral dilemmas, injustices and contradictions<sup>6</sup>
- concern with complex issues, understanding the implications of decisions, and identifying inconsistencies<sup>7</sup>
- focus on self-identity and self definition

#### Youth's Thinking Abilities

- Increased:
- capacity to use insight and self-critique
- complexity of knowledge systems
- comprehension of abstract concepts

Increase ability to:

- take on more personal responsibility
- self-govern
- set goals and delay gratification
- reflect, examining own inner experience; thinking things through
- sorting, analyzing, and then generalizing and making connections
- think deeply for greater periods of time
- think creatively, flexibly, abstractly, broadly

### SOCIAL GROWTH

- peers replace family as central social group
- need to feel sense of belonging to group and/or place; need to fit in
- desire for a close mentoring relationship with non-parent adult
- social and cultural traditions regain some of their previous importance

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<sup>3</sup> All material comes from previously written work in the *Enriching, Invigorating, & Refining Career Development Internship Programs: A Reflective Manual* by Abby Remer 2006.

<sup>4</sup> the act or process of knowing, *including* both awareness and *judgment*

<sup>5</sup> the capacity for rationale or intelligent thought, *especially* when *highly developed*

<sup>6</sup> "Literacy Links 2: Focus on Teens," Youth Development Institute, October 2003 p.40.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

- increasing intimacy with and concern for others,<sup>8</sup> typically with same-sex friend (and later in romantic relationships)

### **EMOTIONAL GROWTH**

Notable fluctuation between emotional highs and lows

Concerned with:

- self-esteem, recognition, personal dignity, self confidence

### **PHYSICAL GROWTH**

Brain development not yet complete, especial connections between neurons in frontal lobes affecting for emotions and mental abilities

Due to rapid physical growth

- require more sleep
- require more calories for growth spurt

Additional characteristics

- sexual maturity
- more self conscious about appearance

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<sup>8</sup> Usually learned within same-sex friendships and then used in romantic relationships (Huebner)

## ***Setting Boundaries***

### *Navigating a Sometimes slippery slope*

The relationship between mentor and intern can get tricky when the intern confides serious personal issues to the mentor. A mentor should never start providing advice. The first thing the mentor should do is contact the program coordinator who will handle the situation. It's imperative for the program to have and make sure mentors *know established protocols* for when a youth wants to speak about issues outside the purview of the internship. The mentor needs to:

- Remain the adult and be objective, not deal with the youth as a peer friend. Interns most often turn to mentors exactly because they can offer more experienced, adult responses that isn't given from a family member.
- Clearly respect physical and informational intimacy boundaries. Mentors should be told when entering the internship program when to draw the line and urge students to talk to the program coordinator who might suggest that the intern get outside professional help.
- Always alert program coordinator rather than acting alone when the issue's of immediate serious concern. A "game plan" should be created, which might include program staff contacting guardians, school personnel, or in some cases the authorities.
- Uphold the program policy on confidentiality for the different issues interns may raise.
- Keep in mind when hearing from an intern about a situation that teenagers are in a stage where they strain for independence from their guardians' control, can be thoroughly absorbed in relationships with their peers, and, react out of proportion to what the situation might dictate.

## Assigning Authentic Work

### What is Authentic Work?

- Well planned in advance with a thoughtful scope and sequence rather than isolated unrelated menial tasks
- Relevant to what the mentor's or department's work
- Solicits and incorporates the intern's voice, interests, and feedback from the planning stages on. (see "Initial Intern Work plan")
- Provides opportunities for interns to learn and employ new skills that are endemic to the work
- No more than 10% should be repetitive, purely clerical work. Authentic work has substance, although it can include menial tasks as part of its content
- Provides opportunities for interns to learn and employ new skills that are endemic to the work
- Provides intrinsic reflection component that help youth identify the salient lessons they learn about themselves in the working environment

#### *Xerox Queen*

If a mentor assigns too much clerical work, work with him or her to come up with a project-whether it be documenting something or critiquing an endeavor from a teenage point of view that the intern would do in addition to the administrative. There's almost always something useful a mentor can think of when considering needs beyond the day-to-day work.

### Tips To Share With Mentors

- Encourage mentors to insert "goodies" into the intern's day, such as taking her or him behind the scenes, along on a chore, or to a staff meeting, etc. Although these may be mundane to staff, interns are absorbed in these sorts of breaks from the routine

## Mentor-Mentee Initial Work Plans<sup>9</sup>

### Introduction

As the above research reveals, it is beneficial to give interns the chance to provide input into defining their work with mentors. It is important to prepare (train) mentors in how to take the lead in this process while respecting interns' interests. The attached form can be used as a guide to laying out a scope and sequence of work that will help interns understand the overall picture of their efforts. Identifying what will indicate success for each work period will likewise help mentors predetermine clearly what they expect their intern to accomplish and the support they may need to provide. It is important to help mentors understand that the Mentee-Mentor Initial Work Plan is a "living tool," not a document set in stone. It lays the groundwork or for a jumping-off place to start the evolving work the mentor-intern partnership will undertake.

### Criteria

The following is criteria for quality Mentor/Mentee Initial Work Plans:

Master plan developed by the mentor-mentee team that

- takes into account intern's interests, knowledge, strengths, and learning goals
- assigns authentic work that is meaningful and connected to the organization's mission
- is ambitious (stretches intern while acknowledging her/his knowledge)
- What are the program structures that support youth development principles?
  - o Clear purpose and goals
  - o Training for youth and adults
  - o Explicit parameters – what they will control
  - o Decision-making structure
  - o Periodic assessment
  - o Celebrations of their contributions
- lays out a scope of work that progresses over time and has a clear timetable
  - o but do not over-structure or your reduce space for youth
    - ♣ biggest issue is the adults, usually
- delineates the mentor's role and support s/he will provide
  - o identifies short-term goals and indicators to know if they are met
- serves as a "living" document that is continually updated as the internship moves on – don't make the process too elaborate or it will eat up the program

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<sup>9</sup> Note: *Big Brothers/Big Sisters research demonstrated that youth who feel their mentor takes their preferences and interests into account are more likely to show improvement in their behaviors and attitudes than are youth who feel their mentor is less interested in them.*

## Initial Intern-Mentor Work Plan

Mentors and interns, please fill out this form together on the first day of the program. The initial work plan will probably change, but it is very important to try and map things out in the *beginning* to identify a sense of direction over time.

INTERN: \_\_\_\_\_ MENTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

### 1. STARTING THE PROCESS—ANSWERING SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

The following process is designed to help the mentor clearly determine what the intern's work will look like over the course of the program and assist the intern in seeing how their work will progress over time and what standards of success they should aim to meet.

#### *Mentor's Needs*

- Do you need work that is *(check one)*
  - directly connected to your daily work
  - a project you have not had time for yet
  - a project that will help the department in general
- Would you prefer that the work be *(check one)*
  - in-depth (project-based) experience
  - series of tasks/work that provide an overview
- What is your overall goal for your work with your intern?

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#### *Intern's Interests and/or Strengths*

- What interests does your intern have?

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- What skills/knowledge does your intern have?

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• What skills will your intern need for the work?

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• How will your intern attain the new skill/knowledge? What kind of support might you need to provide?

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## 2. Defining the Initial Work Plan

Mentor, it is vital to offer your intern a sense of what will be the *overall* structure and direction of her or his work. Please consider the following issues before actually mapping out the Work Plan:

- What will be the
  - . Scope (range of the intern's work over the course of the program)
  - . Sequence (flow of experiences over the course of the program)
  - . Indicators of Success (description of the desired result for each goal)

### Phase 1

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase 2

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase 3

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase 4

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign the Initial Work Plan below and hand in a copy to us. Keep one for you both to refer to from month to month. Thank you for planning what we hope will be a mutually beneficial, meaningful experience. Please feel free to contact us for any reason.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Intern signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

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# MENTOR TRAINING

## Sample Agenda

### I. Introduction

(Why are we here? Who are we all?)

### II. First Mentor Experience Recall

(What was best about the experience? What do you wish might have been different? Written authentic reflection sentence starters: *What I believe a mentor does is...*; *What I most want my intern to get out of our partnership is...because...*; *What I want most to get out of my mentoring experience is...because...*; *An asset I bring to mentoring is... . Therefore I...*  
[debrief/sharing])

### III. Program Basics

(program logistics and fundamental goals and beliefs)

### IV. What is a Mentor? What is Not?

(Solicit definition from mentors to help clarify what a mentor's role should be. Help them understand they are responsible for providing an educational experience, not using their interns as volunteers to give menial tasks.)

### V. Working with Youth

- A. Concepts of positive youth development and how might play out in the program
- B. Mentor/Supervisor guidelines  
(Review/elaborate on printed guidelines handout)
- C. "From the Mouths' of Babes: Potential Positive & Negative Mentor Impact"  
(intern alumni share what worked best/least and distribution of mentor impact sheet)
- D. Role-Play scenarios  
(internship staff plays interns in challenging scenarios and coach mentors/supervisors on how to best handle the situation)

### VI. How to Assign Youth Work

(expectations, youth voice, How to lay it out. Introduce Initial Intern-Mentor Work Plan form)

### VII. Expectations and Requirements of Mentors/Supervisors

(nuts and bolts; reasons behind rules, accountability, confidentiality, appropriate boundaries policies)

### VIII. Mentors'/Supervisors' Questions and Concerns

(former mentor(s)/supervisor(s) share their advice and experience. Reassure them of your support, and send them away with a boost of confidence)

### IX. Authentic Reflection Training Evaluation

Attached form

**Mentor's Authentic Reflection Evaluation**  
(for use at the end of a mentor training session)

1. *I originally thought that mentoring my intern would be....*

*After this training I believe....*

2. *Questions I still have about the internship is....*

*So I will...*

3. *Something I would have liked to have been addressed in the training is...*

*because...*

4. *What was most important about the training for me was...*

*because...*

**Section Two**  
**Handouts for Use During Mentor Training Session**

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## **Mentor Training Warm-up: Take Stock of Yourself Evaluation**

- *The most important mentors in my life have been...*
- *What made the experience so good with my best mentor was...*
- *The three or four qualities I have that are going to help me be a great mentor are...*
- *A tendency I might have that could potentially make it more difficult to work successfully with my mentee could be...? (e.g., talk a lot more than you listen)*

*The way I will overcome these tendencies is*

- *What I most want my intern to get out of our partnership is...*
- *What I would like to learn about myself as a mentor is...*

***Resiliency Factors  
and  
Career-Development Internship Programs***

***CARING & TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS***

Foster a learning community where youth feel a strong connection to at least one adult and to their peers

***OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTRIBUTE***

Support meaningful youth participation in decision making or actions that make a difference to others, and for which they are held responsible. Opportunities for leadership roles and to contribute to their environment

***CONSISTENCY, CONTINUITY & SUPPORTS***

Provide a structure that supports sustained relationships with program staff and/or mentors. Expectations and rules are clearly spelled out; understood by staff, mentors and interns and applied consistently.

***ENGAGING ACTIVITIES***

Employ interactive teaching strategies that are challenging, fun, creative, meaningful and developmentally appropriate for youth that relate to substantive work, program content, and/or personal lives.

***HIGH EXPECTATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY***

Participants are challenged with work, activities and thinking opportunities that are demanding, yet within reach.

***REFLECTION & CRITICAL THINKING***

Encourage curiosity, questioning, brainstorming, problem solving, and continual self-reflection.

## **Mentors**

### **Keys to success...**

- Have high expectations.
- Give positive feedback when the intern handles a situation or task well. Provide ways to readdress and correct mistakes.
- Give your intern a voice and choice in deciding on activities.
- Be consistent and dependable throughout your relationship.
- Help the intern feel like a part of the workplace. Involve the intern in deciding the nature of the work.
- Encourage the intern to ask questions, reminding them that there are no stupid questions.
- Listen. Be sensitive and responsive to intern's cues. Understand that young people vary in styles of communicating and habits of disclosure. Let the intern know she or he can talk to you without fear of judgment
- Pull the intern aside to discuss a problem; do not discuss it in front of other people.

# Sample

## Mentor Guidelines

### Handout

#### Strategies For Success With Teenage Interns

Remember the slippery transition from teen to adult? Remember, what's on the outside doesn't always match what's going on inside them. The guidelines below might bring back fond memories of this exciting yet confusing time. In a nutshell though, high expectations, appropriate support and consistency over time, clear communication, and continued feedback are the best ways to help our youth really learn all the benefits and *responsibilities* of being an adult in work and society.

#### *You the Mentor—A Delicate Balance*

As a mentor you have an opportunity to significantly affect the lives of young people by sharing yourself, and guiding and supporting their commitment. Guiding them through their transition into adulthood can be an immensely rewarding experience. With this comes the responsibility of **clearly setting boundaries**.

Interns are often *unaware* of proper office behavior and expectations that are not made explicit—and so they *take their cues* directly from *you*. It's vital to set a welcoming tone while simultaneously *clearly* making a distinction between your two roles. Remain clear, consistent, and "the boss" while enjoying the friendship that can evolve in a mentor-intern relationship.

Likewise, the rules and policies regarding *appropriate behavior* toward any staff member apply to interns too. It is up to all of us—entrusted with the lives of these young students—to provide a *safe physical* and *emotional environment* in which they can thrive.

#### **"Teenagers 101"—Guidelines to Successful Experiences**

Teens are at a fascinating juncture in their lives. They are both adults and adolescents simultaneously. It's easy to forget that so much is **unfamiliar** to most of these young adults. By and large most have never been in a workplace, and some rarely outside their neighborhoods. This internship is likely the first time they are surrounded almost entirely by adults who are working—as opposed to their peers at school or family. In the beginning most of them are *anxious*, although you might not be able to detect it because of their honest enthusiasm or seeming confidence.

With your help, guidance, and feedback interns will gain skills and confidence at an astounding rate. Strategies for success:

- Explain your role as a supervisor and your expectations of your intern the very first day (*Basic office etiquette and communication skills obvious to us are not obvious to interns. Be **extremely explicit** when explaining tasks and expectations, especially in the beginning of your relationship.*)
- **Clarify** "implicit" workplace rules (*dress code, how much time for break, what to do if ill, personal phone calls/use of computer, what to do when task at hand has been completed, who to speak to when you're out of the office*)
- Work together to outline opportunities for your intern to contribute to and shape your work and relationship. Assign meaningful, challenging, and varied work, which is crucial to interns' sense of pride and ownership (*Emphasize responsibility and accountability. Interns will take more pride in their work and get more out of their time here if they feel personally attached to what they are doing, whether working individually or with others.*)
- Provide clear instructions of tasks, describing them in the order in which they should occur
- Explain how the assigned work, *regardless* of the task, relates to the "big" picture of what is needed and/or others are doing
- Encourage questions (*Interns are frequently quite shy, especially when they perceive that you are working.*)
- Continually **tell** interns how they're doing. Unlike teachers in school, mentors do not "grade" interns' work. Your verbal feedback, whether positive recognition or constructive criticism, is their only barometer for how they are doing. If there is a problem, try to construct a solution together so that it becomes part of the process toward accomplishment, rather than their personal failure.
- Routinely give positive reinforcement for successful work. Tell them what a great help they are, **why** it's important, and **how** it fits in; what a change you see in the quality of their work, etc. Don't forget how **unsure** they are, even if they don't look it. And we all need to know we are important
- Share from your own career experience, and show a personal interest in the intern as an individual. Reassure the intern that you are there for her or him throughout the internship and beyond

## Accountability—Intern Requirements

Always be clear that interns must meet *all* their requirements. It's crucial to *resist* giving teenage interns the flexibility you might grant older, more experienced staff. While they may *look like* adults, they are still green to the workplace. It's essential they first learn and *abide by all* the rules before earning privileges. This is as crucial an element in the internship as the specific skills and content information they learn because it applies to any and all situations in their future.

We are very strict and clear about interns' requirements from their very first interview on. However, as in a family with two parents, internship staff can only succeed if you *maintain the same policy* so that interns receive the same consistent message:

- Interns must always be *on time*, and *fulfill* their *time requirement* with you, coming on a regular, mutually established schedule (6 hours/week for the Academic Program and Mon-Thurs 10-5pm for the Summer Program).
- We *discourage excused* absences. Obviously, emergency absences are unavoidable, but please reinforce that interns *must* get in contact/leave a message *right away* rather than simply not showing up.
- Please *contact us immediately* if there are problems with lateness, not calling, absences, or any other issues. It's best to *immediately* address what may at the moment seem like small incidences to prevent any from becoming a true problem. We have lots of experience in dealing with these situations, so please alert us so that we can help.

## A Home of Their Own

As students juggle school, work, and family situations, it's important to create a **stable** and **consistent** work environment—a sanctuary that offers the opportunity for them to thrive.

Prior to their internship, have space, equipment (phones, computer terminals, etc.), and any other necessary items ready.

### **Joining the Department Family**

Introduce your intern to people within your organization. Help students feel *welcomed* and *included*. Whenever possible, try to *include* interns in meetings, visits to other departments, the library, or other daily routines that will be new to them, even if they seem mundane to you. You will be amazed at how *fascinated* interns are in those endless meetings you might dread.

### **Create a Road Map Together**

Interns thrive when they get a sense from the beginning of the "big picture" and have some input about their work, while simultaneously getting a sense of what they might do over the course of the program. Interns are with you to do productive work, and to do it well, not simply to observe the workplace or do menial tasks.

- The first day, sit down together and construct an initial work plan for the entire internship. Include the intern in the process. Explain that this initial work plan will likely change, but for the moment this is the vision you two are developing. Set high expectations and specific deadlines; interns consistently rise to the occasion.
- Encourage your intern to ask questions and have her or him *summarize* the end goal to ensure you are both on the same page!

### **Faster Than the Speed of Light**

Interns virtually *always* work faster than you think! Likewise, they quickly pick up or already have skills that will likely surprise you. Always have additional projects for times when your intern completes tasks ahead of schedule.

### **When You Are Out**

Nothing *disconcerts* and *discourages* interns more than arriving to unexpectedly find you out of the office without *clear instructions* of what to do. *Please* have a clear plan for your intern if you will be in a meeting or out of the office, and to whom she or he should report.

### **Share Yourself**

Share your own professional experiences with the intern, even if they don't relate directly to her/his project. These "insights" are some of the most valuable parts of their experience.

### **Learning Curve—Your Time**

As a point of reference for those who are new to mentoring, the "start up" time in orienting and training someone of *any* age is always greatest at the front end. After this initial period the intern will become more independent and need less of your attention while producing useful work.

## ***Setting Boundaries***

### *Navigating a Sometimes slippery slope*

The relationship between mentor and intern can get tricky when the intern confides serious personal issues to the mentor. A mentor should never start providing advice. The first thing the mentor should do is contact the program coordinator who will handle the situation. It's imperative for the program to have and make sure mentors *know established protocols* for when a youth wants to speak about issues outside the purview of the internship. The mentor needs to:

- Remain the adult and be objective, not deal with the youth as a peer friend. Interns most often turn to mentors exactly because they can offer more experienced, adult responses that isn't given from a family member.
- Clearly respect physical and informational intimacy boundaries. Mentors should be told when entering the internship program when to draw the line and urge students to talk to the program coordinator who might suggest that the intern get outside professional help.
- Always alert program coordinator rather than acting alone when the issue's of immediate serious concern. A "game plan" should be created, which might include program staff contacting guardians, school personnel, or in some cases the authorities.
- Uphold the program policy on confidentiality for the different issues interns may raise.
- Keep in mind when hearing from an intern about a situation that teenagers are in a stage where they strain for independence from their guardians' control, can be thoroughly absorbed in relationships with their peers, and, react out of proportion to what the situation might dictate.

## Mentor Potential Positive or Negative Impact

Dear Mentor:

Below are a short list of points you should keep in mind when working with your intern. Journal entries from actual interns follow in order to give you some insight into the impact you can make on the youth with whom you work.

- Mentors have the ability to positively affect mentees' self-esteem
- Not everything mentors do has a positive impact. Oversights and/or not being sensitive to how interns feel and react can occur if mentors don't remain vigilant about communication
- Sometimes mentors can't tell if they are making a positive impact or not on interns' lives. Remember that youth can wear a mask of ennui in order to appear "cool," guard emotions/reactions due to shyness, and/or be absorbed by a serious issue going on outside the internship. Likewise the benefit may occur later such as in their future work. A seeming lack of interest can also be their nervousness about being in a new setting. Trusting relationships need time to grow.

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### Sample Journal Entries About Mentor's Impact

#### *Mentor Impact!*

Intern Comments About You<sup>10</sup>  
What's Good + What Could Be Better

#### ***Acknowledgment of Work***

*...What I never knew before today was the work that my mentor and I were doing together is actually quite important. At first I thought it was just a simple job that nobody else has found the time to do, therefore we had to do it. Having my mentor telling me this makes me know that I'm giving back to the community.*

*...Today was how much I had to do for different people. It also surprised me when Susan made it clear about how important I am now to the department. I felt very proud of my work during the week.*

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<sup>10</sup> **Please note** these are reflection journal excerpts, English is not many interns first language, we don't expect them to edit and proof read their daily reflections.

### **Part of Team/Responsibility**

*...I really felt part of the team. The work I was doing was important, and in doing it, it made me feel important to. It was a big challenge because I was given a lot of responsibility.*

*...I found it interesting that my mentor trusted me to take on a very important job...*

*...Originally I felt like they were just giving me work to be occupied. However, they actually depended on the work I was doing. The work I was occupied with was tasks that needed to be done. This made me feel equal to these distinguished people that made me feel proud.*

### **Mentors as Guides, Role Models, and Friends**

*...What I want to say is that I really enjoyed sitting down and talking to my mentor because I learned a lot about his personal struggles and the effects they've had on his life and it really served to encourage me in my own path in life.*

*...[My mentor] is always giving advice about my future and I pretty much enjoy that because I know that I can get somewhere with all of these advices. -Edwin*

*...[My mentor] offered to help me study for my Biology Final, which is tomorrow. I appreciated the fact that he took nearly two extra hours, from 5-7, to help me out. I recognized and appreciated the fact that D. didn't only see me as an intern to work with only, but that he was there whenever I needed additional help.*

*... I thought he doesn't have time to teach someone something about his career but I was completely wrong! He usually took all the time to explain me how is the correct way to do this. The most important of it was that after I finish his work he made me feel that I am really being of great help to him and the whole dept.*

### **Disappointments**

*...Sometimes I felt so bored and lonely when I'm all by myself in a room. My mentor was busy with her works which leaves me all by myself. Whenever I was told to make copies, I get so tired and in my mind wish that she could assign me to something different.*

*...She was telling me to do all this stuff that I had no idea of doing but I listened anyway and took lots of notes. It was too much for the first day and I feel like I'm not qualified enough. I hope they know I'm not a computer-wizz kid, so...!*

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## How to Assign Youth Work<sup>11</sup>: Mentor Guidelines Handout

- Review the initial game plan, soliciting intern input in order to foster a sense of ownership.
- Clearly and precisely explain the work, detailing the objectives and expectations for the assignment, and the timeline in which it must get done.
- Explain the job's importance and its larger context. Outline the way tasks relate to those performed by others and the department as a whole.
- Model specifically what you want done.
- Set high standards and make intern responsibility explicit. At the same time emphasize your availability to help, and ask about the type of support they like best
- Remind interns the only "stupid" questions are those that aren't asked.
- Monitor interns on a daily basis, checking in and giving feedback. Offer criticism in a constructive manner and in the context of a learning experience. Always provide feedback out of other's hearing. Provide opportunities for interns to readdress any mistakes.
- Throughout the work and at completion recognize intern's contribution. They are particularly sensitive to the existence or absence of praise being new to the work world and working alongside adults.
- Ask the intern to reflect on what it is he or she found most interesting to learn or experience and why this is so.
- Make a logical transition to the next piece of work building on what's come before whenever possible.

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<sup>11</sup> Inspired in part by *Manual for Supervisors of Young Workers*, distributed by New York City Partnership and Chamber of Commerce, p. 8.

## Initial Intern-Mentor Work Plan

Mentors and interns, please fill out this form together on the first day of the program. The initial work plan will probably change, but it is very important to try and map things out in the *beginning* to identify a sense of direction over time.

INTERN: \_\_\_\_\_ MENTOR: \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. STARTING THE PROCESS—ANSWERING SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

The following process is designed to help the mentor clearly determine what the intern's work will look like over the course of the program and assist the intern in seeing how their work will progress over time and what standards of success they should aim to meet.

### *Mentor's Needs*

- Do you need work that is \_\_\_\_\_ (*check one*)
  - \_\_\_ directly connected to your daily work
  - \_\_\_ a project you have not had time for yet
  - \_\_\_ a project that will help the department in general
- Would you prefer that the work be (*check one*)
  - \_\_\_ in-depth (project-based) experience
  - \_\_\_ series of tasks/work that provide an overview
- What is your overall goal for your work with your intern?

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### *Intern's Interests and/or Strengths*

- What interests does your intern have?

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- What skills/knowledge does your intern have?

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• What skills will your intern need for the work?

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• How will your intern attain the new skill/knowledge? What kind of support might you need to provide?

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## 2. Defining the Initial Work Plan

Mentor, it is vital to offer your intern a sense of what will be the *overall* structure and direction of her or his work. Please consider the following issues before actually mapping out the Work Plan:

- What will be the
  - . Scope (range of the intern's work over the course of the program)
  - . Sequence (flow of experiences over the course of the program)
  - . Indicators of Success (description of the desired result for each goal)

### Phase 1

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

### Phase 2

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

**Phase 3**

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

**Phase 4**

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Timeframe (days/weeks/months): \_\_\_\_\_

Indicator of Success (measurable result): \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign the Initial Work Plan below and hand in a copy to us. Keep one for you both to refer to from month to month. Thank you for planning what we hope will be a mutually beneficial, meaningful experience. Please feel free to contact us for any reason.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Intern signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mentor signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date