

Mentor Program Guidelines

Overview:

This guide explains the mentor program developed by the HIV Community Planning Council. All members of the Planning Council can learn from the guide because:

- Everyone has been a new member at some point and can appreciate how a mentor would help navigate the complex, wide-ranging issues engaged by the council.
- Members who are considering leadership roles have the option of requesting a mentor.
- All council members learn complex information throughout the year, often by listening to other council members. This accumulated learning can serve new members during meetings and through the mentor program.
- New members of the council will want to know how to select a mentor and best use their mentor's expertise.
- Members who have served on the council for at least a year may become mentors, and they need to understand that role.

Vision of the Mentoring Program:

This program has been designed to cultivate leadership and community spirit in all council members as well as provide supportive guidance for navigating the council system and structure. Additionally, mentoring intends to deepen council members' cross-cultural communication and trust as well as to broaden understanding of the system of care and prevention. The desired outcomes of the mentoring program include:

- Nurture the leadership capacity in all council members through giving and receiving support in one-on-one mentoring.
- Develop skills for reflective/critical thinking and decision making around important council issues.
- Develop skills for understanding council processes.
- Increase the retention of new council members, in particular our consumer base.

What are the Goals of the Mentor Program?

The goal of the mentor program is to nurture leadership by providing one-on-one support for each new council member. Mentoring furthers the larger goal of the HIV Planning Council which is to create a culture of understanding and decision making where each council member appreciates their unique contribution to the group. The mentor program is designed to integrate some fifty council members from wide-ranging backgrounds.

Successful mentoring ensures continuity of membership and enhanced participation. Mentoring teaches how to contribute by answering questions common to all new members about process, funding and other key issues.

How does the Mentor Program Function?

To address the potential confusions faced by new members, it was decided to set up a one-on-one match where older council members would volunteer to give advice and historical background to new council members. The mentor program formalizes knowledge transfer between established council members and new arrivals.

Once the new council member selects a mentor and the mentor agrees to the match, it's up to the two members to coordinate their connection. The key agreement is that the mentor be available to explain council-related issues. They can visit over coffee, by email, over the phone, etc.

Mentors agree to give council information to the new members. A key part of delivering knowledge includes giving all members the freedom to vote with their own conscience.

How Does a New Council Member Select a Mentor?

New council members select their mentor, who is ideally an established member with experience on the council. New council members may ask for guidance from Council Staff about which council members are available to serve as mentors. The Membership Committee then approves the mentor relationship.

The mentor relationship is administered by the Council Support Staff. Prospective council members are told about the mentoring program during their pre-orientation. Once voted onto the council, new members, Council Support staff and the pool of available mentors complete the following steps:

- 1)** Council Support explains the mentor program and asks the new members to read these guidelines.
- 2)** The new council member drafts a short list of people on the council who they would like to be their mentor.
- 3)** Council Support reviews the list of prospective mentors and determines if the top choice is already mentoring sufficient people. If new member requests a mentor who is unavailable, Council Support asks the new member to work with their second choice. If the second choice is also fully booked, then the third choice mentor will be selected.
- 4)** Council Support calls the requested mentor and asks if they will work with the new member.
- 5)** Mentors stepping into this role for the first time attend a meeting set up by Council Support Staff to review these guidelines and clarify the expectations and duties for both mentors and new council members.
- 6)** The mentor and the new council member build their relationship. It's suggested that they meet at least once or twice in person plus phone conversations and email check-ins during the new council member's first three months on the council. They may set up a regular meeting time or meet on an as needed basis.
- 7)** If a new Council member wishes to have a different mentor, that request should be made to Council Support.

- 8) The intention of the mentoring program is to support new members until they are sufficiently grounded in council activities.
- 9) The mentoring cycle is complete when a council member feels sufficiently adept at council activities to become a mentor for new members.

How will the Mentor Program be Implemented?

The Mentor training will be supported by a combination of HIV Planning Council groups including:

- **Membership Committee:** In conjunction with Council Support, the Membership Committee prepares, sends out and gathers results from the mentoring survey. This annual evaluation of the mentoring program solicits information about how the program is effective and what can be done to improve the program.
- **Council Support:** Council support identifies mentors and negotiates the matches between mentors and new council members and monitors the mentor program. Additionally, Council Support prepares the new council members to select a mentor during orientation training

What is the Mentor Skill Set?

Council Support determines which council members are ready to be mentors based on criteria that include:

- Mentors have been on the council long enough to have participated in a complete yearly HRSA and CDC funding cycle, as well as the San Francisco General Fund budget cycle. These cycles drive the allocation and prioritization efforts that are the Council's main responsibility, and it's important that mentors understand these annual rhythms that move the council forward.
- A demonstrated ability to teach and explain council concepts. Since mentors are asked to provide guidance, it's important that they be able to clarify concepts.

The Mentoring Lifecycle

On a semi-annual basis, Council Support will review the currently active mentor relationships. Council Support checks in with both the mentor and the new council member after the mentoring relationship has been active for a full year. In an email or phone call, Council Support asks if the mentoring relationship is still ongoing, or if the mentoring relationship can be dissolved.

The mentoring relationship may continue at the request of the participants. If the mentoring relationship is dissolved, the mentor may request another new council member, or the mentor may request a break from mentoring.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is it required to have a mentor? Having a mentor is voluntary. No new council member is required to be assigned to a mentor.

How often should I meet with my mentor? That will be determined by you and your mentor.

Can I request a different mentor? Yes, contact Council Staff if you feel you need a new mentor.