

How to begin a mentoring program

Building an effective mentoring program requires recruiting participants, training mentors and providing ongoing support.

RECRUITMENT

Being clear about what kind of mentoring program you wish to provide will help you to decide what you are looking for.

Will it be:

- a confirmation mentoring program?
- prayer partners?
- coffee and chat?
- gifts/skills based?
- a Bible study?
- a service project?
- short term or long term?

What are your expectations for the program?

- What would the specific roles be in your program?
- How will you recruit mentors?
- How could you equip and encourage the mentors?
- How will you create a plan from recruitment to ongoing support?

Start small and take your time.

- Be sure you don't build a program bigger than you can sustain. Quality leaders who are trained well and share interests with the people they mentor, are so important.
- Mentoring can be hugely beneficial. Tap into the strengths and assets of your congregation to find a diverse group of mentors.
- If necessary, it's best to patiently assemble a team of mentors while saying 'no' to those who may not be suitable, even if it means being unable to reach everyone right away. Insist on finding the attributes you need, don't water down the effectiveness of the program by compromising.



TRAINING

1 TRAIN YOUR MENTORS THOROUGHLY AND INTENTIONALLY.

Research shows that when mentors are given a specific role to play, they are more satisfied and their mentoring relationship proves beneficial for both participants. This role might be listening and giving advice in certain areas of life, or a teaching or information-providing role such as leading a Bible study. Whatever it is, make sure your mentors are given clear expectations and objectives.

Find mentors with different interests, personalities and experiences. This will help you match up mentors and mentees. It is also important that mentors have a maturity of character that will positively influence and consistently engage the person you match them up with.

2 ENSURE YOUR MENTEES KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED OF THEM TOO.

Mentees need clear expectations and objectives. It's important that mentors are well-matched with their mentees for effectiveness. It helps if there is a common interest, whether sport, movies or something similar. This allows a starting point for conversations or activities, while the mentoring relationship grows and develops.



SUPPORT



Provide and engage in ongoing support. Mentoring, like any relationship, can have difficulties. It can wear down even the most enthusiastic volunteer.

Your mentors need support and encouragement to stay enthusiastic about the impact they can have. Meet with mentors regularly to build them up and remind them of the importance of their mission. Provide them with the tools they will need and evaluate how they are going throughout the process.