

## Match Closure

All mentoring relationships will eventually close. Many times, closure is a celebration for matches that have successfully completed the program or reached the maximum age limit. Often times, these matches will continue their relationships outside the mentoring program with the parent's permission. Unfortunately, matches sometimes close prematurely and this can put a great strain on mentors and youth. Mentoring professionals who attended *Matching, Monitoring, and Match Closure* workshops sponsored by Mentor Michigan in partnership with Michigan State University Extension generated ideas to assist mentoring professionals in facilitating match closure, positive or unexpected, in a way that best supports youth and mentors.

### Why do matches end prematurely?

- Issues related to the program or process
  - Not a good fit – they do not like each other
  - Rushed match – didn't prepare all parties appropriately or make a good match
  - Insufficient monitoring
  - Program loses funding
- Issues related to life circumstances
  - Mentor or mentee's family relocates unexpectedly
  - Mentor loses job and ends match because of budget issues, depression, or new job's work schedule that is incompatible with mentee's schedule
  - Mentee is sent to juvenile detention, foster care, or residential program that will not work with the mentor or is too far away
- Program initiated closure
  - Mentor commits criminal act
  - Repeated refusal on the part of the youth, mentor, or parent to follow program rules
  - Concern regarding boundaries of one or more parties
- Mentor initiated closure
  - Mentor is not comfortable going to the child's neighborhood
  - Mentor is not feeling valued
  - Mentor is not engaged with the program
  - Mentor is not comfortable with the mentee's family
  - Peer mentors (teens) become too involved with sports or other activities and cannot maintain the commitment
  - Volunteer ends the match once school or community service requirement is complete
  - The mentor believes the child does not really "need" a mentor
  - The mentee is "too much to handle"
  - Relationship or program did not meet expectations
  - Youth and/or parent did not respect mentors boundaries
  - Mentor and mentee are not compatible
- Youth initiated closure
  - Older teens feeling they have outgrown having a mentor
  - Child did not really want a mentor or was mandated to have a mentor
  - Relationship or program did not meet expectations
  - Mentor and mentee are not compatible
- Parent initiated closure

- Issues arise between the mentor and the parent
- Communication problems
- Relationship or program did not meet expectations
- Mentor displayed inappropriate boundaries
- Parent felt threatened by the relationship
- Parent returned from prison and no longer saw the need for mentor

### **How can you prevent match closure or intervene when issues arise?**

- Provide proper training prior to matching youth and mentors
- Talk with parents about the program and mentoring. Make sure they have realistic expectations.
- Establish matching criteria and follow the criteria when making matches
- Utilize contracts signed by all parties (mentors, youth, parents) at the beginning of the match and revisit the contract if goals or requirements are not being met
- Consistent match monitoring – contact with mentor, youth, and families
- Meeting with matches in person – not relying solely on email and phone contacts
- Use a strength based approach
- Let matches know you are willing to provide support
- Be the “bad guy” if communication is an issue and help the match strengthen communication
- Look for and address red flags including:
  - Inconsistency
  - Pauses in conversation – mentor, mentee, or parent not completely answering your questions
- Do not procrastinate when issues arise
- Schedule a meeting with mentor, mentee, and parent (if appropriate) as soon as problems or challenges arise
- Listen to all sides of the story – particularly when there is conflict
- Use conflict management skills and facilitate an agreement to disagree
- Provide on-going training on topics that will support relationship development and allow mentors time to practice new skills
- Help matches brainstorm when there are roadblocks
- Organize major milestone events to celebrate the match and keep motivation and morale high

### **How do you support positive match closure?**

- List closure as one of the match goals and celebrate when the goal is reached
- Provide mentors with tool kits with closure ideas
  - A questionnaire that can be completed together to facilitate reflection
  - Give the mentee stamped and addressed envelopes so he or she can write the mentor letters
  - A disposable camera and picture frames or scrapbooks
  - Ideas for a final celebration
- Preparation before closure happens – let everyone know what to expect
  - Tell the parent and ask them how they think the youth will react
  - Work with the parent and mentor to ensure that they understand the closure plan
  - Taper off visits over time versus going from weekly visits to no visits all at once

- Make it a celebration
  - Invite other matches and parents if appropriate
  - For school based: hold a group closure/ graduation celebration
  - Host a dinner with the match and family to talk about what went well
  - Celebrate the positive growth of the relationship and the completion of goals
- Facilitate reflection – remember and recall
  - Provide the mentor and mentee with pictures and other materials and have them make a collage that reflects their time together
  - Discuss where they were when they started the match and how they have changed
- Communicate the reason for closure clearly and ensure everyone is on the same page
- Provide an opportunity for all parties to evaluate the:
  - Program
  - Match
  - Progress
- Thank everyone for their participation.
- Help the match determine if there will be any post-match communication
- Discuss and implement a plan for future program involvement
- If appropriate, provide assistance in transferring the match to a new program (i.e. from school-based to community-based)
- Recognition through awards, certificates, and newsletter stories
- Share their story with others
  - Newsletters
  - Award nominations
  - Press releases/mentor recruitment materials
  - As an example in presentations
- Provide opportunities for continued program involvement

### **How can you support unplanned or negative closure situations?**

- Be available and return calls and emails promptly
- Get all the information from all relevant parties
  - Listen and ask questions for clarity
- Facilitate a closure meeting for all parties
  - Encourage honest and clear communication
  - When possible, try to be as positive and encouraging as possible
  - Help all parties of the relationship feel successful by discussing what went well in the match
  - Reassure youth and mentors this is not a failure and it is an experience all parties can learn from
- If the mentor is closing the match because of a move, job loss, or similar reason:
  - Explain the situation to the youth and have conversations about life changes etc.
  - Have another mentor in line for the mentee if possible and appropriate
- Be open and answer questions
- Thank them for being part of the program
- Let them know they did all they could (if they tried to resolve issues)
- Ask if they would like to try again and be re-matched
- Offer an opportunity to get involved in the program in a different role