

THREE KEY PRINCIPLES TO CONSIDER WHEN DESIGNING VIRTUAL MENTORING PROGRAMS.

1. Structure & Context.

Provide mentors with plenty of structure (advice on what to do when). This will allow them to gain a sense of the overall objectives of the mentoring program, their role as a mentor and how to navigate the program as effortlessly as possible.

Additionally, expectations regarding the role of the mentor and mentee should be clearly outlined. Both mentors and mentees should be provided with the necessary documents and trainings to adequately outline and communicate their expectations and boundaries as it relates to the mentoring relationship.

Mentors should also be provided with a number of resources which will 1) support them with achieving their own personal and professional development goals and strengthen their mentoring skills as well as 2) be made aware of the support services available to their mentees in order to appropriately refer them to external supports.

Overall, both mentors and mentees should be provided with adequate training as it relates to the program in general, outlining expectations and boundaries as well as setting goals. Extra training for mentors should include facilitating online, knowing resources and safeTALK.

2. Connection & Building Community.

Building community online through mentoring programs may be difficult for both mentors and mentees. When designing virtual mentoring programs consider integrating opportunities for connections to be made. One example is to have multiple mentoring relationships run for a specific program at the same time and create space for mentors / mentees to connect with other mentors / mentees. Monthly meetings could be scheduled to have each group meet with their peers to exchange ideas and keep each other accountable. This time could encourage reflection which is essential for personal and professional growth. Overall, this allows folks the opportunity to connect with others in the program.

3. Check-ins & Check Points.

When designing a mentoring program consider scheduling check-in meetings throughout the relationship. Regular email reminders at key points in the program are useful and help maintain commitment. This time can be used to assess goals and review expectations.