

# MENTOR TRAINING PACKAGE



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The Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance (VYMA) is committed to building the capacity of youth mentoring providers and supporters to ensure the growth of sustainable, quality youth mentoring across Victoria.

We know that youth mentoring is an effective way of providing young people with supportive and enriching experiences and that running a successful program involves hard work and a commitment to quality.

Quality mentoring programs require good planning, strong governance and solid operating procedures – including mentor training.

The VYMA, with the support of the Victorian Government, has produced a training package to help programs develop the skills and knowledge of volunteer mentors so they can build strong, supportive relationships with young people.

Because the relationship between a mentor and young person can seem so natural, the importance of mentor training can sometimes be overlooked. Yet volunteer mentors tell us that they feel more confident and are more likely to succeed if they have been involved in training that prepares them for their role.

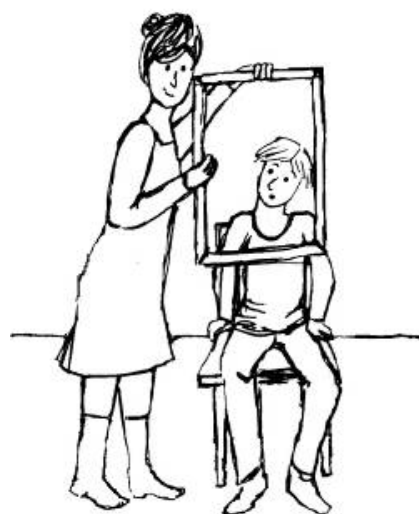
This training was prepared through consultation and collaboration with members of the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance – a diverse range of youth mentoring programs across the state.

I would like to thank all those who contributed to the package, including the VYMA Member's Advisory Group. Contributors are gratefully acknowledged in the Appendix.

I trust this resource will provide a quality foundation to help prepare our valuable volunteer mentors for the journey ahead.



**Sarah Johnson**  
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## About the mentor training package

The training of volunteer mentors is critical to the success of each mentoring relationship.<sup>1</sup> This training package presents the minimum training for volunteer mentors.

As the tone of a mentoring relationship is established within the first few meetings, it is important that this training occurs prior to a mentor's interaction with a young person.

The package has been designed as a flexible resource that can be adapted to suit individual programs. Content has been tailored from a broad range of existing Victorian training packages as well as specialist sources. The package consists of:

- handouts for mentors
- a facilitator's manual containing running sheets and activities designed to provide participants with an active learning experience.

## Additional resources

There are a number of organisations providing great resources that can be used to value-add to this training. In particular, we suggest you take advantage of the following:

a) Australian Youth Mentoring Network's Mentor Fact Sheets include topics such as : Adolescent Issues, Building Relationships, Getting to Know Your Mentee, Troubleshooting the Relationship, Careers and Jobseeking, Dealing with Bullying, Anger Management, Leaving School - Where to Now?, Ice Breakers and Mentoring Boys. [www.youthmentoring.org.au](http://www.youthmentoring.org.au)

b) Youthbeyondblue also has factsheets to deal with issues including depression and anxiety, drug use, bullying, eating disorders, suicide and self-harm and family breakups. [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)

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<sup>1</sup> Sipe C.L. (1998). 'Mentoring Adolescents: What we have learned,' in J.B. Grossman (ed.) *Contemporary Issues in Mentoring*, Philadelphia, USA: Public/ Private Ventures, pp.10-23.

## **A minimum standard of training**

Scoping by the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance (VYMA) has shown marked variations in the content, duration and quality of mentor training across Victoria. For example, the duration of training ranged from 1 to 72 hours.

This training package provides program co-ordinators with a resource to support high-quality initial training for mentors. It encourages a consistent approach that builds on quality principles and practices in youth mentoring.

Researcher Jean Rhodes suggests that the strongest mentoring relationships result after a minimum of six hours of pre-match training.<sup>2</sup> This package covers seven core modules for quality mentoring training and can be delivered in eight hours; however, it is suggested it be extended to ten or eleven hours to ensure sufficient time for discussion, optional activities and the presentation of program-specific information.

## **About the modules**

While the seven core modules are essential elements of mentor training for all programs, each program will have a different focus depending on the goal, setting, cohort of young people involved and ongoing support provided by program staff.

The four additional modules can either be used to strengthen the initial mentor training or used as ongoing training to support opportunities for mentors throughout the time they volunteer.

The modules are of different lengths with suggested times given for each. Every effort has been made to place the modules in logical sequence. We ask facilitators to take care if changing the order in which the modules are completed.

Programs should feel free to adapt the content to suit the nature of their program and its participants. In particular, group-based mentoring programs may need to make modifications to cater for the specific activities in a group setting.

Be aware that not all content will be relevant to all young people. For example, there may be different considerations for young people with a disability or those from a different cultural background.

In addition, you may choose to spend additional time brainstorming and running group discussions if participants need additional development in a particular area. Program coordinators who piloted the training in September 2010 found this to be particularly useful when exploring issues such as self esteem and listening blocks.

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<sup>2</sup> Rhodes, J. (2001). *Youth Mentoring in Perspective*, The Centre Summer.

## Ongoing training and support

Mentor training and support must be ongoing. This package provides initial training only. Co-ordinators should ask all mentors to commit to continually broadening, improving and refreshing their mentoring skills.

Quality programs offer mentors the chance to meet or speak regularly (at least monthly) with the program co-ordinator, who provides supervision and listens to any concerns the mentor might have.

One of the best ways a co-ordinator can ensure they are providing appropriate support is through regular meetings for mentors that allow them to share their experiences.

Such a forum can also provide an opportunity for ongoing training, including content covered in:

- Module Eight - Working with young people from refugee and migrant backgrounds
- Module Nine - The strengths-based approach
- Module Ten- Mental health and well-being
- Module Eleven - Alcohol and other drugs



## Tips for trainers

The role of the training facilitator is as important as the content of the training package. The subject matter can be foreign to participants, who will come from a variety of backgrounds – with varying educational, cultural and life experience – and will be in different stages of their lives. It is the facilitator who brings the content to life and makes it applicable to the specific program.

Ultimately, good trainers are facilitators. 'Facilitate' means 'to make easier', and a facilitator is actually a:

- coach
- listener
- learner
- manager of group process.

'Facilitating' suggests the idea of a collaborative relationship between the trainer and participants – a relationship that helps mentors learn, rather than imposes learning on them.

The following principles can help you conduct more effective training sessions.

### ***Before each training session***

1. Think about the principles of adult learning.

- Adults want to see a reason for learning something. The teaching must be applicable to their role as a mentor to be of value to them.
- Adults are practical and goal-orientated. They focus on aspects of training that they feel are most useful to them.
- Training should be grounded in the learners' experiences. Adults have accumulated a foundation of knowledge and life experiences that are a valuable resource. They learn best when new information and concepts are built on this foundation. Be aware of when your participants bring to the training.
- Adults learn best when they are in a supportive environment. They want guidance, not competition – they don't want to be put on the spot or feel like they are being tested. They learn best when they are both psychologically and physically comfortable.

2. Know the training package inside-out.

- As necessary, customise activities and handouts to address the characteristics of your program, your specific group of mentors, and the strengths and needs

of the young people they will be mentoring. Be prepared to offer real-life examples that illustrate your program's experiences.

- Think about how you will facilitate the session, and be prepared to make on-the-spot adjustments if, for example, an activity is not working well or you find you need to spend more time on one activity.

3. Select a space for the training that is physically comfortable and contributes to group interaction.

- The room should be large enough (but not too large), private (people from outside the group should not be walking in and out), quiet, clean and well-lit.
- Avoid a traditional classroom set-up. Depending on the size of your group, have a table large enough for all the participants to sit around, or multiple tables that are square or circular. If that is not possible, arrange chairs in a circle as this will facilitate discussion.
- If small groups are going to be meeting as part of the activities, make sure there are nearby rooms available, or be sure the training room is large enough that small groups can meet within it without distracting each other.

4. Have everything ready.

- Copy handouts.
- Gather any required materials and equipment: pens, masking tape, name tags, and anything else you might need for the session.
- You may want to prepare a script that you can use to guide your facilitation and keep the training on schedule.

5. Arrive early.

- If necessary display signs just inside the building entrance to show participants where to go for the training session.
- Get to the training room about 30 minutes ahead of time to set up the area: arrange chairs, do any necessary advance writing on the newsprint and check equipment.
- Be sure that refreshments (tea, coffee, water, etc.) are available.
- Greet participants as they arrive at the training room.

### ***During each training session***

1. Create a comfortable learning environment.

- Be sure the physical space is conducive to group learning and that participants can hear each other as they speak.

- Create an atmosphere where participants are taken seriously and where they also have fun. Think about ways to inject humour into the training sessions. For example, use relevant cartoons or tell funny anecdotes about the experiences of mentors. People are more open to learning when they are enjoying themselves and feel comfortable enough to risk making mistakes.

## 2. Pace the training appropriately.

- Encourage the exchange of ideas while also keeping activities on track. Move things along quickly enough to keep participants from becoming bored but slowly enough to make sure they absorb what is being discussed.
- Allow time throughout the session for participants to ask questions. Where appropriate, involve the whole group in answering questions, but also have a feel for which questions should be answered quickly so the session can proceed.

## 3. Model good listening, feedback and problem-solving skills, as these are the skills mentors will need.

- Listen carefully and respectfully. Acknowledge what people say even if you don't agree, as people need to feel they are being listened to.
- Maintain eye contact with each person as he or she speaks. Monitor your non-verbal signals as well as your verbal comments.
- Respond by guiding, not imposing. Be non-judgmental. Repeat and address key points.
- Help participants develop collaborative problem-solving skills. Involve them in answering other participants' questions, and have them work together to arrive at solutions to problems.

## 4. Think about how people learn best.

- People remember about 20 per cent of what they hear, 40 per cent of what they see, and 80 per cent of what they discover for themselves.
- Summarise major discussion points on butchers paper or a whiteboard. Post the paper on the walls around the room so you and your group can keep referring back to, and expanding on, earlier ideas and contributions.
- People learn best when they succeed frequently. Structure activities so participants end with a sense of accomplishment.

## 5. Be yourself.

- Know your limitations – if you don't know the answer to a question, that's okay. You don't need to know all the answers.

- Say you will try to find the information they requested and get back to them. Make sure you follow through on this.
- Have a sense of humour.

### **After each training session**

#### 1. Get feedback from participants.

- Prepare an evaluation form (see Appendix One) that asks for feedback on both the process and the content of the training session. Distribute it at the end of the session, and ask participants to complete it before they leave.
- Schedule about five minutes at the end of the session for participants to complete this task, so they do not feel rushed and have time to write thoughtful feedback.

#### 2. Reflect on what worked well and what did not.

- Do not use the evaluation forms to give yourself a rating. Instead, use the information to help you think through what went well from the participants' point of view, what you need to modify about the content, and what facilitation skills you want to work on.
- Along with participants' feedback, give yourself your own feedback on the training. Think about the situations where participants seemed involved, bored, stimulated, confused, angry or having fun. Based on your self-observations, make necessary adjustments in session content and your facilitation strategies.

#### 3. Follow up on information you promised participants you would get for them.

- During the training session, keep a 'to do' list of information (or answers to questions) that you tell participants you will obtain for them.
- Try to get the information and then contact the participants who requested it. If you can't find the information (or the answer to a question), contact the participant to let him/her know about the situation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Adapted from *Training New Mentors: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities* (2007). The Hamilton Fish Institute & The National Mentoring Center, US.

## Using guest speakers and external trainers

Sometimes programs will bring in external trainers to provide ongoing training on a special topic, rotate speakers to keep participants interested or even to deliver the entire training.

For example, a local cultural worker, mental health worker or drug and alcohol worker could be available to present and/or answer questions following modules eight, ten and eleven.

In addition, a presentation by a current or past mentor and /or young person is a wonderful way of providing participants with a real-life insight into the mentoring experience.

While your program should, ideally, have the capacity to conduct its own initial mentor training, the following tips can help you work effectively with external trainers on occasions when they are needed.

### ***Finding trainers***

Your program should work with local experts who understand the community and the young people you support. To find local experts, first think about the topic you would like to have presented. Brainstorm a list of agencies and individuals you know who specialise in these topics. Prioritise your first, second and third choices and begin making phone calls.

Another option for connecting with regional and state-wide experts is to tap into resources from your local Mentoring and Capacity Building Regional Co-ordination Project or contact the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance.

### ***Costs and contracting***

Sometimes you can get the expertise you need from an outside trainer for free through a partnership agreement or other arrangement. Outside trainers may expect compensation for their time. Before hiring a trainer, check your organisation's policies on hiring contractors. Questions to ask include:

- What type of paperwork and contract will be required?
- How much money can we spend on a trainer?
- What type of credentials should the trainer have?
- Can they provide supplies and photocopies?

To open negotiations ask about the trainer's rates, or simply say how much you can afford. Once you have agreed on some parameters, ask the potential trainer to

submit a proposal. If you like the proposal, move to the next step in the process – getting the agreement in writing. Your organisation may already have a contract template. If not, ensure the contract includes information about dates, times, topics, expenses and resources.<sup>4</sup>

### ***Staying involved***

If a co-ordinator decides to have an external facilitator run the training, it is imperative that they also attend the training. This is a great opportunity for the co-ordinator to get to know the potential mentors for matching, as well as identify any concerns that may prevent individuals from becoming mentors.

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<sup>4</sup> Adapted from *Training New Mentors: Effective Strategies for Providing Quality Youth Mentoring in Schools and Communities*, (2007). The Hamilton Fish Institute & The National Mentoring Center, US.

## **Policies and procedures**

Each program must ensure it has appropriate policies and procedures to deal with issues that might arise throughout the mentoring relationship. Every organisation needs to be aware of the risks to which it is exposed and have a plan to ensure that these risks are reduced. Awareness of policies and procedures are keys to a successful risk-management strategy.

This training package assumes that each organisation has developed some core program-specific policies to ensure there is a clear response to most situations, and that the mentor program co-ordinator is familiar with these.

While the training may not cover each policy and procedure word for word, facilitators must ensure they provide potential mentors with information so they are clear about their roles as mentors and their responsibilities with regard to the organisation and program policies, including those on confidentiality and duty of care.

The following checklist provides a list of topics mentors should have knowledge of either through organisational policies or through a 'Mentor Manual' to be provided before they are matched with a young person.

### **The mentoring program**

- Background and rationale for program
- Aims and objectives
- Program review and evaluation policy

### **The mentoring process**

- Accreditation process (includes screening, training and selection of mentors)
- Matching procedure
- Match agreement
- Match support and supervision
- Closing a match
- Re-opening a match

## **Mentor policies**

- Mentor position description
- Rights of young people
- Rights and responsibilities of mentors
- Code of Conduct (including unacceptable behaviour)
- Child safety and Duty of Care
- Privacy, confidentiality and disclosure
- Legal liability
- Crisis and after-hours support
- Equal opportunity
- Sexual harassment
- Use of alcohol and drugs (including smoking)
- Vehicle usage
- Reimbursement policy
- Grievance resolution process
- Complaints resolution process
- Health and medical consent (including forms)

*A Guide to Effective Practice for Mentoring Young People, produced by the Department of Planning and Community Development, provides further information to support quality youth mentoring. It contains guidelines on mentor screening, orientation and matching and checklists to assist in program development. This resource is available via the VYMA website at [www.youthmentoringvic.org.au](http://www.youthmentoringvic.org.au)*



### Sample Mentor Training Evaluation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What did you find to be most useful in today's session?
  
2. What did you find least useful?
  
3. Was there anything you felt was missing from the session or anything you would like to have known more about?
  
4. In what other ways could we improve the session?
  
5. Please rate the following:

	Poor		Average		Excellent	
Effectiveness of trainer	1	2	3	4	5	6
Training room	1	2	3	4	5	6
Training content	1	2	3	4	5	6
Training activities	1	2	3	4	5	6
Training materials	1	2	3	4	5	6
<i>Overall rating</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6
  
6. List other topics or concerns you would like to have addressed in upcoming training sessions.
  
7. Please use the back of this form for any additional comments.

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#### Online Consultation

Program co-ordinators and trainers completed an online survey in September 2009 to identify core topics for the package. Contributors included:

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#### VYMA Member's Advisory Group

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**Other contributors**

Bridget Maidment – Edit and Design  
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Zoe Evershed - Illustrations

### Resources

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