

Parent/Caregiver Engagement in the Match Cycle

Overview

A strength-based approach to mentoring includes intentional engagement of the family, particularly the parent/caregiver, as an important member of the support team for the match. As we look at how to better engage parents and caregivers, it's important to explore how they can be involved at each point in the match lifecycle. From matching to closure, parents/caregivers know their child better than anyone and can help to support a successful match, when given the opportunity. This resource explores those opportunities.

Mentor Selection

- **Parent Preferences.** Encourage parents to be honest in their preference so that you can find the best mentor for their child.
- **Manage Expectations.** From the very start of the process, make sure that you are clear about what is expected from each party in the mentoring relationship.
- **Parents First.** Present the mentor information to the parent before telling the child about a potential match. This gives the parent the space to reflect on the match prior to committing.

Mentor Orientation

- **Each Child is Unique.** Ask parents to think about what makes their child unique and have them share that with the mentor. It positions the parent as the expert about their child and gives them an opportunity to connect with the mentor in a positive manner early in the match.

Mentee Orientation

- **Parent Orientation.** Prior to/at the same time as a mentee orientation, offer a parent orientation to understand the mentoring relationship and its goals.
- **Focus on Assets.** Encourage parents to start thinking about the strengths of their child and how they can communicate that to the mentor and the mentoring program staff.
- **Offer Home Visit.** This shows that you are willing to meet the family where they are - literally. It also gives you a chance to see the home environment as another key to understanding the family.

Matching

- **Strengths Checklist.** Take time during the match meeting to reflect on the strengths and opportunities within the mentee and the mentoring relationship.
- **Identify Roles.** Setting clear expectations and boundaries early in the match, as well as how to communicate and navigate conflict, will set the match up for success before challenges arise.