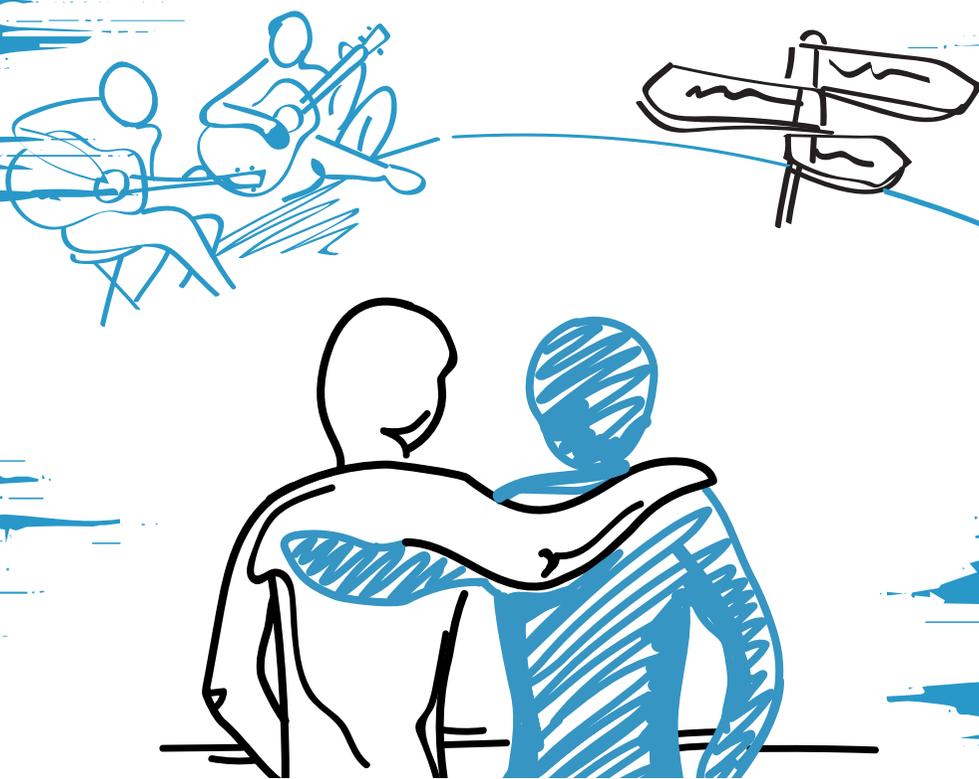


PEER SUPPORT IS THE BEST SUPPORT

Guidebook for Peer Mentoring Programs with Youth in the Social Welfare System



The publication was created within the project "Peer Mentors in Action: Social Inclusion through Peer Mentoring"

PEER SUPPORT IS THE BEST SUPPORT:
GUIDEBOOK FOR PEER MENTORING PROGRAMS WITH YOUTH IN THE
SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

The publication is created by:

CEPORA – Center for Positive Youth Development (Serbia)
'I am the best' Talent Mentoring NGO (Legjobb vagyok) (Hungary)

The publication was created within the Erasmus + strategic partnership in the field of youth project “**Peer Mentors in Action: Social Inclusion through Peer Mentoring**”

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

2020

INTRODUCTION

About the publication

The social welfare or the social protection system in each country exists to provide support and assistance to the most vulnerable categories of the population and to ensure the minimum satisfaction of the needs of all citizens, as well as to prevent the social exclusion of individuals and groups. Young people who are for some reason included in the social welfare system face various challenges that often contribute to the emergence of difficulties in various areas of functioning of the young person's life.

Therefore, in order to prevent negative consequences, it is necessary to organize a system of **SUPPORT** for these young people in a way that respects their developmental stage, the specifics of the circumstances in which they find themselves and the challenges they face. One of the adequate support approaches, underdeveloped in this part of Europe, is **PEER**

MENTORING.

A guide to peer mentoring programs with youth in the social welfare system "Peer support is the best support" was created within the project "**Peer mentors in Action: Social Inclusion through Peer Mentoring**". It is an Erasmus + Strategic Partnership project in the field of Youth implemented in 2019 and 2020 in partnership between **CEPORA - Center for Positive Youth Development (Serbia)** and **Legjobb vagyok (Hungary)**.

The overall objective of the project is to support young people from the social welfare system in significant transitions in their lives and to prevent social exclusion, as well as to nurture their positive relationships with peers by developing a comprehensive guide to peer mentoring programs. The specific objectives aim at creating conditions for implementation of quality peer mentoring programs for at-risk youth, innovating

support for young people in the social welfare system, and expanding the number of civil society organizations using peer mentoring methodology. Therefore, the guide before you is the central result of the project.

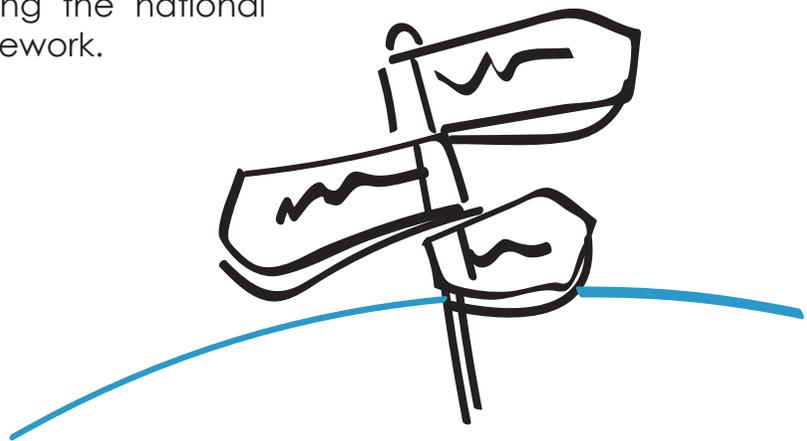
Guide to peer mentoring programs with youth in the social welfare system “Peer support is the best support” is intended for civil society organizations that want to launch peer mentoring programs in their communities. The guide itself consists of four parts.

The first part, entitled “ABOUT PEER MENTORING PROGRAMS” summarizes the literature on effective peer mentoring programs, and this segment provides a starting point for all organizations wishing to launch a peer mentoring program. The guidelines and findings set out in the first part of the guide are universal and not changeable with respect to the specificities of the local community or national legislation. However, since working with young people in the social welfare system implies adherence to normative frameworks and procedures related to the social welfare system, each organization must know and respect the national legislation when setting up and implementing the program. Bearing in mind that the countries from which the partner organizations of the project originate - Serbia and Hungary have organized care for young people from the social welfare system in a significantly different way, it is not possible to derive a unique model of peer mentoring program that would fully respond to the needs of the youth and can be adapted to the national and the local context.

Therefore, the second and third parts of the guide are devoted to the proposals of two models of peer mentoring programs for youth in the social welfare system.

The second part of the guide is the so-called “**Serbian**” model, and the third part of the guide is dedicated to the “**Hungarian**” model. Organizations using the guide can replicate the model in their local communities if they are from Serbia or Hungary, or adapt it to their national and local context if they come from a country that has a social welfare system organized significantly different from the Serbian and Hungarian models. In the second and third part of the guide, the specifics of social welfare in a given country are presented, after which a model for establishing peer mentoring programs for youth in the social welfare system is presented in detail, respecting the national normative framework.

The last part of the guide aims at summarizing and drawing **conclusions and recommendations** on the establishment of peer mentoring programs with youth in the social welfare system.



SECTION 1

About Peer Mentoring Programs

Peer mentoring as part of the peer support system;

Forms and types of peer mentoring;

Mentoring relationship as a major feature of the program;

Phases of the peer mentoring program;

Effectiveness assumptions in peer mentoring programs.

PEER MENTORING AS A PART OF THE PEER SUPPORT SYSTEM

Peer mentoring, as one of the models of the **PEER SUPPORT SYSTEM**, is an effective approach in fostering positive development of children and youth and prevention of their behavioral problems. The strength of the peer support system is reflected in the involvement of peers as carriers of interventions for other young people.

Specifically, during adolescence, the **peer influences** on the individual are extremely strong and they become more dominant than the influences from the family environment. It is often more important to a young person what their friends think and do rather than the opinions of their parents, teachers or other “adults”. In communication with their peers, young people are more relaxed, intimate, more open, and it is easier to achieve both positive and negative influences through these relationships.

A peer support system involves engaging young people in providing various types of assistance and support to their peers. There are several types of peer support that can be distinguished: **befriending, peer mentoring, peer mediation and peer listening (counseling)**. In order for peer support and assistance to achieve their intended and desired positive effects, it is essential that the peer support system is implemented in a planned and structured manner, following certain phases and principles.

Peer mentoring is a type of peer support in which a mentoring relationship is nurtured between two young persons. It is a relationship in which a peer mentor acts as a positive role model for his or her peer who needs help and support. A peer mentor is a person of the same or similar age, who possesses more knowledge, experience and skills, and as such can serve as a positive role model.

FORMS AND TYPES OF PEER MENTORING

When it comes to peer mentoring, two dimensions are most often distinguished in the literature, which differentiate between its forms and its types.

The **FORM** of mentoring is related to the level of structure of the relationship between the mentor and the mentee (a young person receiving support through peer mentoring). There are two forms of mentoring - **informal** and **formal** peer mentoring. When young people spend time together they naturally and spontaneously form relationships and, through talking and sharing experiences, they unconsciously provide different forms of informal support to one another.

In contrast, when it comes to **FORMAL** peer mentoring, there is still a friendly relationship between the two young persons in focus, but it has an additional structure as to how the mentoring is initiated, what

is the dynamics of joint activities, how goals are set, as well as how long the mentoring lasts. Therefore, formal mentoring is more complex in structure and its elements are mostly determined in advance, which is not the case with informal mentoring.



FORMS WITH REGARD TO THE STRUCTURE OF MENTORING

	<i>Informal</i>	<i>Formal</i>
<i>Initiation</i>	Mentor and mentee have a direct, natural and spontaneous relationship.	Through a third party, young people get involved in mentoring programs and make connections with their mentors.
<i>Mentorship</i>	The relationship is less structured, more intimate and more dependent on the specifics of the mentor and the mentee.	There are clear boundaries in the relationship, defined roles and responsibilities.
<i>Goals</i>	Sometimes they are clear and precise and sometimes not.	Most often they are predetermined and clear.
<i>Dynamics</i>	The frequency of interactions is spontaneously determined.	The frequency of interactions is predetermined.
<i>Length</i>	Lasts as long it lasts.	There is a clear beginning and ending.
<i>Supervision</i>	Does not exist.	It exists and it is obligatory.

The **RISKS** of informal mentoring are reflected in the vague roles of mentors and mentees, situations where mentors take on issues in the mentoring process that exceed their capacities, as well as their rapid burnout, because there is no one to consult on how to "lead" a young person. Because of all this, young people providing informal mentoring support often feel insufficient certainty, high responsibility, and can, with the best of intentions, lead the young person in a direction that is not in their best interests. On the other hand, formal mentoring has a framework that "protects" the mentor from these risks, but often there is also an additional "coldness" or difficulty in establishing the relationship between mentors and mentees precisely because of the formality of their roles.

The second dimension, in which we distinguish between **TYPES** of peer mentoring, is characterized by numerous criteria found in literature and practice. These are, for example, the setting in which the program is implemented (usually school or community based), the number of people with whom the mentorship is established (one - to - one , four - to - one, group), then the way in which communication is

established (face-to-face, virtual), as well as the aims to which mentoring is directed (instrumental, developmental). These types are exclusive within their own criteria (for example, if we observe setting in which peer mentoring is implemented, it can be either in the community or at school), but they are not exclusive to the other criteria (so peer mentoring can be realized at school, including two persons who communicate face to face with mentorship being focused in achieving instrumental goals).

Of all the above, the classification of the type of mentoring in relation to the aim of the mentoring process is particularly important to us and will be more closely in focus. The goals of peer mentoring programs may vary significantly, but based on the primary aim, we can distinguish two categories of activities in these programs: activities with an **instrumental** aim and activities with a **developmental** aim. Accordingly, we distinguish between instrumental and developmental peer mentoring.

TYPE WITH REGARD TO THE AIM OF MENTORING

	<i>Instrumental</i>	<i>Developmental</i>
<i>Focus</i>	Achieving practical goals.	Developing a relationship between the peer mentor and the mentee.
<i>Specific goals</i>	Achieving clear (often academic) goals and developing specific skills.	Reaching optimal social, emotional, cognitive and academic development through quality mentorship.
<i>Initiation</i>	The presence of a particular problem or difficulty.	For general support in development of a young person.
<i>Peer Mentoring Training</i>	Not so demanding.	Complex, with necessary mentor's supervision.
<i>Termination</i>	When the goal is achieved the mentoring is done.	Mentoring ends in accordance with program determinations on the optimal duration and needs of young people involved in the process.

As a rule, **instrumental mentoring** lasts less and involves connecting mentors and mentees in order to advance some specific knowledge or skill through mentoring. This can be a task like preparing an exam, learning a language, mastering a computer program, mastering a certain form of dance.... The list of activities can go on indefinitely.

What is the basic feature of this type of mentoring is the instrumental goal itself. That is, the mentoring exists to achieve a **concrete, tangible goal**, the activities planned are directly aimed at achieving that goal (like English lessons), and by achieving that specific goal mentoring fulfills its purpose, and so it ends.

Development mentoring, on the other hand, aims at encouraging the development of a young person. The logical framework behind developmental mentoring assumes that establishing a strong, friendly relationship between the mentor and the mentee supports and enables positive changes or a successful adaptation to the challenges the mentee faces. Therefore, the central focus of mentoring is actually the mentoring relationship between the mentor and the mentee. |

In order to avoid misinterpretation, the mentoring relationship is of great importance also in instrumental mentoring, because it then represents a tool that in many ways not only facilitates, but often determines, the success or failure in achieving the set goals. However, when it comes to developmental mentoring, changes happen less obviously and rarely the goal of mentoring is the same as the topic of individual encounters – the change happens processually. It will also happen in development mentoring to initially set certain instrumental goals, which then serve to support the development of the relationships between the young person and their new mentor.

For example, if a young person enrolls in a mentoring program because she has moved to a new environment for the start of his/her college education, and does not know anyone in a new city, the first instrumental goal for a mentor and this young person may be to research the local community to get her/him adjusted. The developmental goal behind this relationship can essentially be aimed at integrating the young person and establishing their own network of significant others in the new environment.

However, such a formulated goal may be too “difficult” for the young person to articulate and define at first, and it can also create resistance in mentees as it can feel invasive. Working on a specific instrumental goal in our example contributes to reducing the feeling of uncertainty, fear of the unknown and contributes to establishing control and security in a new environment.

Joint realization and a rather simple goal leads to **overcoming the initial uncertainty** in the mentoring relationship and establishes a quality base for further socializing and development through various mentoring activities.

In developmental mentoring, the focus is on building and nurturing the relationship through which the young person is affected over time, and the activities that mentors carry out with their mentees are extremely diverse and vary depending on the needs and affinities of the youth and their mentors. They can range from conducting various fun activities such as going to concerts and sports fields, through educational meetings for learning specific skills, to jointly solving certain practical problems for the young person, such as searching for a flat.

The bottom line is to carry out activities that foster a friendly relationship, but also provide space for mentoring influence, and for enabling, supporting and encouraging the development of the young person.

MENENTORING RELATHIONSHIP AS THE MAJOR FEATURE OF THE PROGRAM

The effectiveness of peer mentoring programs is influenced by a number of **factors**. Despite the fact that most of them are related to the planning and implementation of the program (such as optimal duration, regularity of meetings, proactive mentors, continuous supervision and others), the quality of an established mentoring relationship is a key assumption of **EFFECTIVENESS**. This assumption is based on the scientifically validated hypothesis that a positive relationship with a peer mentor can produce key effects for the mentee, primarily in terms of creating a sense of self-worth, self-esteem and self-confidence. Due to the importance of the quality of the mentoring relationship itself, this chapter will be devoted more closely to the topic of establishing, developing and maintaining a mentor-mentee relationship, and to characteristics that favor successful bonding and relationship-building based on mutual trust and respect.

Like any other relationship, the mentoring relationship develops over time through the various **activities** that the mentor and mentee undertake in their meetings. By sharing information, setting goals, expressing emotions, and regulating behavior, participants influence each other. The chapter below shows one of the models that demonstrates the stages that a mentoring relationship goes through. It is a model called The **B.E.S.T model** (Building - Enhancing - Sustaining - Transitioning) developed by Mentoring Partnership of Southwestern Pennsylvania – a nonprofit organisation that provides various free services to local mentoring agencies and is a major public advocate for mentoring in their region.

Within this model, four phases are presented: **building, enhancing, sustaining and transitioning**. These stages are not always exclusive, and they often overlap. Sometimes the relationship can go

Back to the previous stage, or the cycle can be repeated.

The first stage in which the mentor and mentee get involved together is **BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS**: getting to know each other, establishing trust, clarifying roles, and agreeing on boundaries. In building this, new relationship, it is expected for both parties that they would be excited and/or to have some anxiety. Already at this stage, it is important for the mentor, if necessary, to take the initiative in exploring mutual interests. As trust in this moment either does not exist, or is very fragile, it is important for the mentor to be consistent, authentic and open-minded. Experience shows that what is done at this stage lays the foundation for the rest of the mentoring process.

The second stage involves **ENHANCING THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP**. This specifically addresses to a deeper exploration of personal interests and setting of more specific goals. In addition, at this stage, the mentor makes special efforts to give the mentee the feeling that he or she can be relied upon. The goals that are defined can be personal in nature, career-oriented, focused on academic achievement or anything else

that mentee has in mind. It is very important that at this stage, and further during the process, the mentee is free to speak about her/his ambitions, problems, desires, and for the mentor not to impose his/her own attitudes and beliefs.

In the third phase of the mentoring relationship, trust has already been established, the conversation is more comfortable, personal and open. During the **SUSTAINING** stage, the main focus is to work on previously set goals. However, some new challenges may arise at this stage, for example, as a result of failure to meet initial expectations. This opens up the need to rethink the initial goals and redefine them as needed. In this process, a cross-section look on the process can be helpful in assessing what has already been achieved, what the new goals are, and how to approach them.

TRANSITION is the fourth, final stage and it is the preparation for ending the mentoring relationship. Changes can be uncomfortable and even daunting for both sides, but if termination is well prepared, it will be easier to overcome these feelings. It is recommended to have an open conversation between mentors and mentees about everything

they have accomplished, the time they still have available, as well as what their relationship will look like when the program is completed.

A good relationship through which it is possible to make positive impacts is based on the existence of **TRUST**. Establishing trust is not an easy and straightforward process because both sides enter into this new relationship with a set of their already existing expectations, experiences, and beliefs.

All this affects the way the relationship will develop, the purpose and goals of the relationship, as well as the boundaries that are set. In building trust, one of the key segments is consistency. Therefore, peer mentors should pay special attention to match their words with their behavior. The following table shows the most common guidance found in literature for peer mentors that can help them achieve authentic trust with mentees.

TIPS FOR ESTABLISHING TRUST

Be a friend

Mentor should be to his/her mentee a peer and a friend, not another authoritative figure or parent/foster parent. Mentors should justify the confidence their mentees give them.

Mentors should not impose their beliefs or force their mentee to do things he/she does not want to do. They should always be aware that they are two different individuals. Mentors should always respect the trust they are given.

Mutual respect

Listen

Active listening is a tool for mentors to find out their mentee's interests and goals. They should not give advices if they have not been asked for.

„Step Back“

The mentor should make sure that the mentee is in focus. Mentee should have the major role in making decisions on what to do together, what to talk about, and what goals to focus on. The control in decision making should be given to the mentees as much as possible.

Activities that were planned should be implemented. The mentor should follow the mentee, pay attention and be consistent in his words and actions. While the activity is ongoing, the mentor should be present and attentive to his / her mentee.

Be consistent

Be supportive

In conversation, mentor should avoid the use of dismissive language, like “man up” or “that is not a big deal”. A mentor should show to the mentee that he or she is on his / her side and that the mentor is someone on whom you can rely.

Even though the mentor is there to support the mentee, he should not forget that the basis of the change he seeks is friendship. And friendship itself includes a range of mutual interests and activities that are simply fun. If the mentor and the mentee have a good time with each other from the beginning, that can help for overcoming potential challenges later in the process.

Have fun

Be yourself

If a mentor wants to make a connection with his/her mentee it is very important to be authentic, and to just be himself/herself. A mentor shouldn't act and pretend that he/she is someone else in order to be a better mentor for his mentee – that could have a counter effect.

Be realistic

A mentor shouldn't agree and accept unrealistic demands, activities that require unreasonable amounts of time, money or effort. Setting goals and expectations should be realistic.

The mentor should keep in mind that building a relationship with the mentee is part of his or her task in the process and should be prepared to take responsibility for the flow and development of the relationship. This does not mean that only the mentor is responsible, since their relationship is based on mutual respect and trust. Therefore, much of the process depends on the mentee himself/herself, but the role of the mentor is to encourage and nurture a friendly relationship.

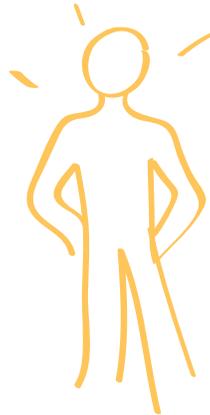
Take responsibility

Defining **roles** and **expectations** is an important issue for all program participants. When it comes to the role of a peer mentor, the importance of his role is quite clear, considering that the desired influences on

the young person are achieved through their connection. However, we must keep in mind that he/she is not an "almighty tool" in our program, so it is important to clarify what mentor's role entails and what it does not.

Peer mentor IS:

Friend
Supporter
Companion
Advisor
Role model
Resource for new ideas
and opportunities
Person to talk to



Peer mentor ISN'T:

Social worker
Parent/foster parent
Teacher
Super hero
Source of money
Therapist
Solution to all problems

As part of peer mentor training it is necessary to discuss and summarize their **expectations**. The next table shows what a peer mentor can expect as a result of

a relationship with the mentee, as well as what shouldn't be expected. It is possible to add to this list some personal items, which differ individually.

PEER MENTOR'S EXPECTATIONS

Justafied

To be a positive role model to his/her mentee

For the relationship to be one directional, at least at the mere start

Some change to happen
To support mentee in reaching their goals

To experience some frustration as a mentor

To be busy

To make some impact in mentee's life

Not justafied

To "reform" or "save" the mentee

To have trust since the very beginning

To achieve great change quickly

That they will be "best-friends-at-first-sight"

For them both to have exactly the same goals

That the mentee will schedule meetings or that the mentee will develop plans on his/her own

To have all the knowledge or understanding about the impact which has been made

PEER MENTORING PHASES

There are 3 phases of every peer mentoring program. They are: Preparation, Implementation and Evaluation.

The **PREPARATION PHASE** involves detailed planning, where we identify the needs of youth, mentors and the environment in general, where we determine the scope and structure of the program, set general program goals, define the timeframe for implementation, define our target groups for mentors and mentees, analyze available spatial, technical and human resources, consider the potential costs of initiating and maintaining the program, specify the roles and responsibilities of per-

sons involved in the program, coordinate the program with the legislation framework, draft the design of the evaluation.

The **IMPLEMENTATION** of the program involves the definition and implementation of specific, interconnected and successive sub-phases, namely: **Recruitment, Screening, Training, Decision making, Pairing, Activities, Supervision and Termination**. The following table shows the aspects of each sub-phase. It is not necessary for each program to carry out all activities within the individual sub-phase. The content adapts to the needs and goals of the specific mentoring program.

Description

Clear presentation of mentoring goals to potential mentors

Advertising:

- through different media channels
 - from the ranks of CSOs
- presentations to different target groups

Defining the target group of mentees (to let mentors know who they will work with)

Specifying the criteria for mentor's selection:

- age
- time they need to give in to the program
- special qualifications

Creating informative flyers for potential mentors (including: the description of the program structure and content, selection criteria, information about screening, pairing and supervision processes, review of expectations, obligations, responsibilities and potential benefits for the mentors)

Initial screening

- Interviewing of mentors
- Analysis of available documentation on every mentor (application, portfolio ...)
- Checking the police file

Additional assessment

- Home visits
- Interviews with persons close to the potential mentor
- Psychological exploration of the mentors personality

Continuous checks

- Through training activities
- Through supervisory meetings

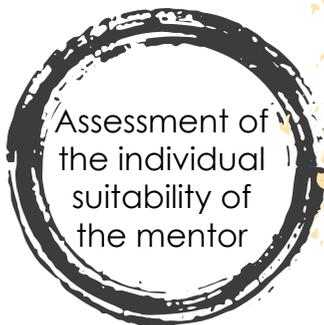
Key Element

Sub-phase

Recruitment



Screening



Description

Key Element

- Gaining knowledge about:
- the program;
 - rules and procedures regarding information confidentiality;
 - developmental characteristics of children and young people;
 - specificities of particular groups;
 - forms of support and supervision;
 - roles and responsibilities.

Sub-phase

Training



- Developing skills:
- Communication: active listening, asking questions, reflecting, summarizing, non-verbal communication
 - Emotional intelligence: empathy, trust, mutual respect
 - Social intelligence: activity initiation, networking, proactivity, goal setting, problem solving, boundary setting, decision making

Setting realistic expectations: what a mentor can expect and what he/she shouldn't

Decision making



Factors to consider when deciding:

Available free time of mentors, Reliability and consistency, Persistence, Motivation, Care, Maturity, Flexibility and openness to different attitudes and behaviors, Communication and listening skills, Border setting skills, Problem solving skills, Willingness to use technical support, Presence of risky behaviors, Negative recommendations

Selection of peer mentors

Informing all applicants whether or not they will be engaged in the program

Description

Key Element

Sub-phase

Pairing



While matching compatible pairs, pay attention to:

- Specific needs of the young person;
 - Mutual interests;
 - Common values;
- Personal characteristics of the mentor (energy, perseverance, sense of humor, patience, introversion/extraversion)

First meeting of mentors and mentees:

- Presence of the person who made the pairing decision;
- Signing of the contract (contains description of obligations and responsibilities of both sides).

Activities



Choosing activities - tips and recommendations:

- Based on current personal strengths, interests and talents of mentees;
- To enable the mentee to achieve some success in offered activities;
- To allow the mentee to take on certain risks but in a safe and caring environment;
 - Choosing interactive activities;
 - Provide entertainment and fun;
- If it is possible, to monitor the implementation of the planned activities.

Description

Key Element

Sub-phase

Supervision



It is conducted by experts who are part of the program staff.

It is ongoing, in parallel with the implementation of activities, in accordance with a pre-established plan.

Supervision includes 2 elements:

Supporting mentors: providing information, resolving problems, encouraging, advising and referring, empowering;

Monitoring: participant safety, compliance with rules, regularity of meetings, developing the mentoring relationships, realization of mentoring activities, satisfaction of participants.

Termination



Reasons for ending the mentoring relationship:

Automatic termination (planned program duration);

Practical reasons (e.g. inability to reconcile free time);

Positive reasons (achievement of set goals);

Unsolvable problems (e.g. disagreement between mentors and mentees).

Steps of a successful termination:

Training: training the mentor on how to successfully end the mentoring relationship;

Preparation time: mental and emotional preparation for termination;

Final meeting: summarizing the whole process (experiences, results, goals, feeling);

Interviews with all participants individually.

PRACTICAL NOTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Recruitment aims to attract as many young people as possible to participate in peer mentoring programs. The call to mentors sets out the selection criteria for mentors. **Criteria** should be sufficiently open and flexible (thus allowing a wide range of interested persons to apply) but not so wide that it could compromise the quality of the program.

- The recruitment process should have certain **features of selection**, which will further, through the screening and training phase, help the decision to select peer mentors who will respond well to the needs of young people.

- It should be given special attention to the process of selection of future mentors, not only to ensure the integrity of the program, but to adequately **protect** the program beneficiaries.

- In order to protect the beneficiaries, in accordance with legal regulations and protocols for the treatment of children and young people, it is necessary to take into account the existing risk behavior of potential mentors or factors that indicate a high probability of it. Risky behavior is con-

sidered e.g. absenteeism, use of psychoactive substances, running away from home, various delinquent behaviors.

- It is very important to note that screening has **continuous character**, that is, it lasts throughout the entire engagement of mentors, and further assessments and verifications are carried out first through the training of potential mentors, and then through supervisory meetings and analyzes of implemented activities.

- Realization of training is usually in the form of **group workshop work**, because in this way it is possible to observe the interactions of the participants as well as to enable a lively, mutual exchange of ideas and experiences. Although this is the most commonly used approach, it does not exclude the possibility of conducting individual trainings, especially if it is observed that this form is more appropriate in specific situations.

By reviewing the research materials on the topic, it is possible to find a general recommendation that the duration of peer mentor training (regardless of the form of mentoring) should cover at least **six hours** of intensive work. Optional training sessions should also be provided if required.

- In the order of the implementation of sub-phases, training should **always precede** the final decision because there is some kind of screening and evaluation of potential mentors happening during the training. It can therefore be expected that at this stage there will be some reduction in the number of potential peer mentors.

- Although special efforts need to be made to pair mentors and mentees on the basis of objective information, detailed assessment of the mentors, and for it to be an impartial decision, it is advisable to take into account a certain amount of **intuition**.

- The basis for building a mentoring relationship may be the mutual interests of the mentor and the mentee, but it is desirable that the mentor also has some different interests that would be a source of **new experiences** for the mentee.

- When considering the personal characteristics of a mentor during the pairing process, one has to be realistic and understand that it is difficult to find a mentor and a mentee with identical characteristics, but rather that this criterion is more used to avoid pairing of persons with extremely different personality

characteristics.

- The choice of activities, in addition to the given recommendations, may be affected by the **form of the program**. In **strictly structured programs**, activities can be predetermined and planned, and the freedom of choice of specific activities by mentors and mentees is greatly reduced, so the realization of those activities is automatically initiated. The justification for this is the fact that these are mostly peer mentoring programs with specific educational goals. For **less structured programs**, mentors and mentees choose activities together, and adherence to the advice and recommendations presented in the table can positively affect the effectiveness of the program as a whole.

- The aim of supervision is to facilitate and encourage mentoring relationships that will result in positive change for young people. Therefore, it is recommended to carry out supervision meetings at least **once a month** (it is possible that at the beginning of the program meetings may be more frequent and the number of meetings decreases with the passage of time in order not to create a dependence of the mentor on the experts).

Supervision meetings are usually held in one-to-one form, but group meetings can also be organized as a form of additional support for the mentors.

- In order to avoid a sense of rejection and betrayal by the mentee, as well as sense of needlessness and failure with the mentor, it is necessary to approach to the termination of the mentorship in a **planned manner** and with full understanding of the process and the anxiety it may bring.

The final phase, no less important, is the **EVALUATION**, which involves the systematic collection of data on the activities, characteristics and results of peer mentoring programs. Evaluation is an integral part of the program envisaged by the plan and should not be viewed as a separate activity carried out at the very end of the program implementation. When evaluating programs, it is important to pay attention to process evaluation and impact evaluation.

The evaluation of the **process** is related to the implementation of the program itself, and it is necessary to collect information on the program, beneficiaries,

implemented activities, interactions of the persons involved, as well as difficulties in implementation and possible deviations from the initial plan. Based on the collected data, the compliance of the implementation with the program plan is evaluated, and the results of this assessment are important for the improvement of the program. The process evaluation can be applied at all development stages of the program and it always precedes the evaluation of the effects.

By evaluating the **impact**, we find out whether, and to what extent, the program we have implemented causes changes in the desired direction in the target population. Regardless of the design we use in the evaluation (non-experimental, experimental, quasi-experimental), the ultimate purpose of impact evaluation is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the program. In evaluating peer mentoring programs, it is important to include all categories of participants involved in the program and to ensure that the evaluation activities are conducted with the youth who received support through the mentoring program, with the mentors who provided support, and with other associates who supported mentoring activities.

EFFECTIVENESS ASSUMPTIONS IN PEER MENTORING PROGRAMS

Knowledge and respect for the elements of **good practice** is considered to be a basic premise of the effectiveness of peer mentoring programs.

Based on the results of a large number of evaluation studies, the structural elements of successful programs have been singled out, which, while not a guarantee of expected outcomes, increase the likelihood that positive effects will be achieved.

There are four groups of elements that can be identified: planning the program as a whole; planning concrete peer mentoring interventions; implementation of the peer mentoring process; and evaluation of peer mentoring programs.

1. Program planning as a whole

a. The peer mentoring program carrier has a developed infra-

structure and organizational capacity;

b. The program is based on good practice - there is a handbook by which the program was created and whose steps are followed;

c. Program initiation is based on a previous needs assessment;

d. The objectives are specified for the area in which change is desired;

e. Financial resources are provided to maintain the program.

2. Planning for concrete peer mentoring interventions

a. Peer mentor recruitment strategies are clearly defined;

b. Appropriate promotional material was created;

c. Screening of potential peer mentors was conducted to assess their eligibility to participate in the program;

d. Adequate training was organized;

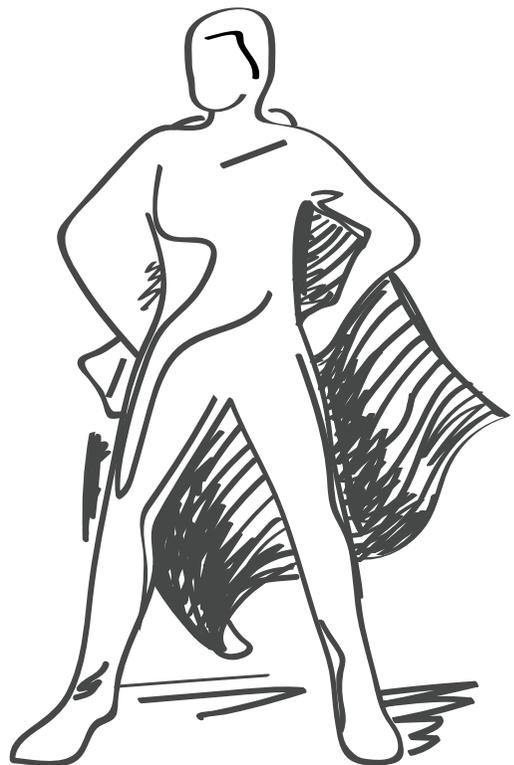
e. Mentors and mentees met before making the final pairing decision.

3. Implementation of the peer mentoring process

- a. Sustainability is planned for a minimum of six months;
- b. There are regular meetings of mentors and mentees;
- c. Mentors show proactiveness (especially in initiating and organizing meetings);
- d. Continuous support and supervision are implemented;
- e. Mentors are supported in organizing and structuring fun activities;
- f. The support of parents or guardians is provided, but not their active involvement in the activities;
- g. A sense of equality in the mentoring relationship has been developed (through mutual respect, encouragement, openness);
- h. Ending the mentoring relationship has been carefully planned and implemented.

4. Evaluation of peer mentoring programs

- a. The program is cost effective (the effects justify the investment);
- b. Continuous internal monitoring and evaluation is conducted;
- c. An experimental or quasi-experimental effect evaluation design is applied.



SECTION 2

Model of the Peer Mentoring Program for Youth in the Social Welfare System – Serbia:

Youth care through the social welfare system in
the Republic of Serbia

Proposal of a "Serbian" model for peer mentor-
ing programs for youth in the social welfare
system

YOUTH CARE THROUGH THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF SERBIA

The guide before you is intended to serve as a tool for planning and implementing peer mentoring programs with **young people in the social welfare system**. This target group was selected because, through a thorough review of successful programs, we recognize the high potentials of using peer mentoring methodology as a tool to support young people from vulnerable social groups.

However, it is noticeable that the methodology itself has been used much more frequently in programs aimed at the general population. Therefore, the next chapter is devoted to presenting the specificities of the functioning of the social welfare system in Serbia, in order to understand the context in which the program will be implemented and the specificities of the target group to which the program is intended.

Social welfare beneficiaries in the Republic of Serbia

SOCIAL WELFARE aims at providing assistance and empowerment

for an independent and productive life in society, and preventing the emergence and elimination of consequences of social exclusion. The right to social welfare is vested in every individual and family **in need** of assistance and support in order to overcome social and life difficulties and create the conditions for meeting basic living needs.

Beneficiary status in social welfare can be obtained by an individual and family who:

- Faces barriers in meeting needs and cannot achieve or maintain quality of life; and/or
- Have not enough resources to meet basic living needs and these needs cannot be met through their work, income from property or other sources.

The categories of beneficiaries of social welfare include:

- 1) **Children** - Minors (up to 18 years);
- 2) **Youth** - Adult persons up to the age of 26;
- 3) **Adults** - Adults aged 26 to 65;
- 4) **Seniors** - Adults over 65 years of age.

According to the **Law on Social Welfare** of 2011, as well as the Draft Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Social Welfare of 2019, a child or a young person may appear as a beneficiary of the social welfare system when, due to family and other life circumstances, there is a threat to its health, security and development, or if it is certain that without the support of the social welfare system it cannot reach the optimum level of development, in particular:

- If he or she is without parental care or at risk of losing parental care;
- If his / her parent, guardian or other carer is unable to care for them without the support of the social welfare system due to health reasons, mental illness, intellectual disabilities or adverse socio-economic circumstances;
- If he/she has developmental disabilities (physical, intellectual, mental, sensory, socio-emotional, multiple), and his/her needs for care and material security exceed the family's capabilities;
- If he/she is in conflict with parents, guardians and the community and if his/her behavior endangers himself/herself and the environ-

ment;

- If he or she faces difficulties with the abuse of alcohol, drugs or other intoxicants;
- If there is a danger that he/she will become a victim or if he/she is a victim of abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation, or if his/her physical, psychological or emotional well-being and development are endangered by the actions or omissions of his/her parents, guardian or other carer;
- If he/she is a victim of human trafficking;
- If he/she is a foreign citizen or stateless person and unaccompanied;
- If his/her parents dispute over the exercise of parental rights;
- If there are other needs for the use of social welfare.

Assistance and support through the social welfare system in the Republic of Serbia

Citizens of Serbia exercise their **right to social welfare** through two types of assistance and support. These are: (1) Social care services and (2) Material support.

The objective of providing **material support** is to ensure the subsistence minimum and to support the social inclusion of beneficiaries. There are several types of material support, and there are specific conditions for each that need to be fulfilled in order for a particular individual or family to qualify for a specific type of material support.

MATERIAL SUPPORT in the Republic of Serbia can be provided through:

- 1) Financial social assistance;
- 2) Financial addition for assistance and care of another person;
- 3) The right to an increased financial addition for the assistance and care of another

person;

- 4) Job training assistance;
- 5) Other types of material support (one-time, in-kind assistance).

Social care services are activities that provide assistance and support to individuals and families to:

- Improve or preserve the quality of life;
- Eliminate or mitigate the risk of adverse life circumstances;
- Create opportunities for independent living in society.

When considering the current Social Welfare Law of 2011 and the Draft Law on Amendments to the Social Welfare Law of 2019, the following groups of **SERVICES** are distinguished:

- Assessment and planning services;
- Daily community service;

- Independent living support services;
- Counseling-therapy and social-educational services;
- Intensive support services for families at risk of displacement of children;
- Accommodation services.

From the perspective of this guide, **counseling-therapy** and **social-educational services** are of particular importance. They cover a form of assistance to individuals and families in crisis, in order to improve family relationships, overcome crisis situations and acquire the skills for an independent and productive life in society.

This service group includes:

- Intensive support services for families in crisis;
- Counseling and support for children and parents, foster parents and adoptive parents;
- Support for a family carer with a disabled family member;
- Maintaining family relationships and family reunification;
- Counseling and support in cases of domestic violence;
- Family therapy;
- Mediation;
- SOS telephones;
- Other advisory and educational services and activities.

According to the Draft Law on **Amendments to the Social Welfare Law of 2019**, a different division of social protection services is planned, and there will be a change in this category. Specifically, this Draft sets out the following categorization of Counseling-Therapy and Social-Educational Services:

- Counseling;
- Therapy;
- Mediation;
- SOS telephone;
- Socio-educational programs.

PROPOSAL OF A "SERBIAN" MODEL OF THE PEER MENTORING PROGRAM FOR YOUTH IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

This chapter of the guide presents all the necessary **elements and phases** of the peer mentoring program, drawn from good practice examples and available literature, tailored to the target group and national legislative framework.

The overall goal of the program

The overall goal of the peer mentoring program is to **prevent the social exclusion** of young people in the social welfare system by providing peer support.

Needs assessment - youth, mentors and environment

For young people in adolescence, social exclusion is one of the most influential risk factors that compromises their positive development. Rejection from positive peer groups and loneliness become even more powerful for young people who are already excluded and marginalized by entering the social welfare system (young people with-

out parental care, young people at risk, young people with delinquent behavior, young people with disabilities) due to various obstacles and life events. According to [research data in Serbia](#), every third adolescent shows signs that he or she needs additional support in the field of social and emotional development. In vulnerable youth groups this percentage is only increasing.

The negative effects of social exclusion are strongest in the various [transition periods](#) of young people involved in the social protection system (such as leaving the housing system or facing criminal charges, or entering the social protection system for the first time), when they are additionally vulnerable. Without a proper support system, a young person can adapt to these changes in a way that results in even greater difficulty.

On the other hand, active youth from civil society organizations, as well as from the wider community, who want to support youth in the social welfare system often do not master the necessary [skills](#) or do not find ways to adequately support the youth without entering "the role of the savior" or taking responsibility for the fate of every young

person they support.

Organized peer mentoring programs open the door to the development of new youth leaders and youth workers and the promotion of [youth work](#).

Even though peer mentoring is not a new concept and "seems familiar", in Serbia there are no organizations that specialize in peer mentoring and that deal with this subject in a professional manner. There have been many attempts to introduce mentoring (where mentoring is provided by an adult supporting a child or a young person) through various [Big Brother / Sister programs](#) (with more or less success), mainly focused on instrumental mentoring (achieving a specific goal for a young person or a child who receive mentoring support).

There is still no active peer mentoring program in Serbia that adheres to good practice guidelines and that can be used as an example of good practice for the Serbian context.

Mentoring with adults as mentors is much simpler for the organization, as it involves lower levels of mentor training as well as simpler monitoring, with greater responsibility for the effects and behavior of the mentors lying in them-

selves.

Peer mentoring involves organizing significantly more support for mentors, especially when the mentees are youth facing different challenges. In order for peer mentoring to be effective and not have contra-productive effects on the beneficiaries, it has to be done "by the book", following a series of organized steps.

Compliance with the national legislative framework

Bearing in mind the target group for which the programs are intended, it is important to observe the coherence of peer mentoring programs with the legislative framework in the field of **social welfare** and **youth**.

In the Republic of Serbia, the current **Social Welfare Law** of 2011, as well as the **Draft Law on Amendments to the Social Welfare Law** of 2019, recognizes civil society organizations as a legiti-

mate provider of social care services and as a significant resource for cooperation with social service providers established by the state. Namely, the **Social Welfare Law** of 2011 defines the subjects of social welfare and states that activities in the field of social welfare, ie individual social care services, may be provided in accordance with this law by an association, an entrepreneur, a business company and other form of organization, established by law (Article 17). Services include activities and goods available to beneficiaries that improve the quality of their life through meeting needs and eliminating and / or mitigating risks. This clearly recognizes the potential that other entities can represent as **service providers** and opens the door to civil society organizations as active social welfare subjects.

Given that peer mentoring programs are the focus of this guide, it is important to emphasize that, from the perspective of social care services, they would be an example of **other advisory and educational services and activities** (according to the **Social Welfare Law** of 2011).), that is, an example of a **Socio-educational program** (according to the **Draft Law on Amendments to the Social Welfare Law** from 2019). It

is important to note here that in the Republic of Serbia there are still no standards for licensing of this group of services, but it is expected that this situation will change in the coming years. Therefore, organizations wishing to be **licensed service providers** should monitor the state of social welfare and license their services when the conditions are met.

The current **Youth Strategy for the period from 2015 to 2025** recognizes young people from the social welfare system as a significant segment of its target group, and their empowerment, social inclusion and active participation are recognized as aspirations through various elements of this Strategy. Peer mentoring programs for young people in the field of social welfare contribute to the following goals of the National Youth Strategy:

1. Specific objective (1.2):

Increased harmonization of knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in the process of lifelong learning with the needs of the labor market.

Strategic goal: Improved employability and employment of young women and men

Area: Youth employment and entrepreneurship

Comment: Through peer mentoring programs, mentors them-

selves acquire significant skills that are relevant to the labor market, and in addition, they themselves empower young people through the process of peer mentoring.

2. Specific objective (2.2): The quality and accessibility of youth work has been improved and its recognition ensured.

Strategic goal: Improved quality and opportunities for acquiring qualifications and development of competencies and innovation of young people.

Area: Education, upbringing and training of young people

Comment: Individuals who want to provide support to young people from the social welfare system are supported through peer mentor training and continuous supervision during the program, and in this way their development and the development of youth work programs through peer mentoring is supported.

3. Specific objective (3.2): Conditions have been established for capacity building and synergy in the work of the YPS and sustainable development and inclusion of a larger number of youth organisations that implement youth activities.

Strategic goal: Improved active participation of young women and men in society.

Area: Activism and active participation of young people

Comment: Through the involvement of peer mentors, the active participation of young women and men in providing support to young people from the social welfare system is encouraged, and the development of new peer mentoring programs increases the number of organizations that conduct youth activities.

4. Specific objective (5.2):

Improved programs for respect for human and minority rights, gender equality, acceptance of diversity, tolerance and fostering non-violent means of communication.

Strategic goal: Improved conditions for developing the safety culture of young people.

Area: Youth safety

Comment: The peer mentoring program directly nurtures and encourages all elements of this specific goal. Through the training of mentors, their skills are strengthened directly, which continues during the implementation of the program with young people. At the same time, through the influence of peer mentors as positive role models for young people, young people are nurtured to respect for the human rights of all people.

5. Specific objective (6.2):

Increased availability and scope of activities for the prevention of social exclusion of young people at risk.

Strategic goal: Improved support for social inclusion of young people from categories at risk of social exclusion.

Area: Social inclusion of young people

Comment: Peer mentoring programs themselves directly aim at preventing the social exclusion of young people at risk. By involving peer mentors in working with young people from the social welfare system, young people get their peer-associate, a friend who encourages them and helps them to be active members of their community.

According to the still valid [Law on Juvenile Delinquents and Criminal Legal Protection of Juveniles](#) from 2006, peer mentoring programs could be included in the spectrum of support to juvenile offenders through the institute of an educational order or special obligation.

The law itself does not clearly define who has the responsibility of organizing the implementation of the [educational order](#), however, the interpretation of other provisions, which say that the guardianship authority

informs the public prosecutor about the course and fulfillment of educational orders, indicates that the guardianship authority should be responsible for the implementation of the educational order. Therefore, the inclusion of a young person in the peer mentoring program as part of the fulfillment of the educational order needs to be realized in cooperation with the [center for social welfare](#).

Program phases

The peer mentoring program consists of the following successive phases: [Preparation, Implementation and Evaluation](#). Each of the stages will be covered in detail in the following guide.

Time frame

One program cycle, covering the implementation of all phases of the program, takes on average for about [2 years](#), or 24 months.

Participants in the program

According to the situation in the Republic of Serbia, civil society organizations may be adequate [providers](#) of peer mentoring programs.

Depending on the selection of a narrower target group for each specific program, [partnerships](#) (formal and informal) with different community actors should be considered.

These include: actors in the field of social welfare, such as the Center for Social Work, the Center for Foster care and Adoption, the organizer of institution-based accommodation for children and young people in the local community, etc.; stakeholders in the field of education, such as high schools and universities - if potential peer mentors are recruited in this way; civil society actors to work together to develop the program or provide resources to cover a specific component of the program (such as training and supervision of peer mentors, or recruiting

them, or reaching the target group of mentees). Consideration should be given, in line with the resources available and the existing partnerships of the carrier of the program, to developing collaboration relationships with a number of other actors from the state, civil and business sectors, if the need arises.

The target group

We target the target group of young people receiving support, ie mentoring, from groups of **young beneficiaries of social welfare in the Republic of Serbia**. Taking into account the specificities of each of the situations that brings young people in the system and the analysis of their needs, it is not responsible to state that all young people in all situations need appropriate support through a peer mentoring program.

This primarily refers to those youth in need of urgent response and care by competent institutions, such as victims of trafficking, youth exposed to violence and

etc. Peer mentoring programs can also be helpful in working with these categories, but by no means in the acute phase of resolving their situation, nor does their inclusion in the program imply that the topic of mentoring itself will be focused on resolving their situation.

The categories of youth who are "eligible" for programs of this type are **youth without parental care** (especially in periods of leaving institution-based or foster care), **youth with disabilities** (especially during the transition to the next level of schooling), **youth with behavioral problems** or **youth executing educational orders** (but then peer mentoring is not the only and basic form of intervention).

In accordance with the expertise of the organization, its strategic commitment, resources, the organization should create a program for a specific segment of youth in the social welfare system. If one tries to create a program for "all" young people, there is a high risk of encountering difficulties in the organizational part of the program, as well as not adequately responding to the needs of all young people who participate, and even the risk of some contradictory effects.

When it comes to **peer mentors** as the second target group of the program, when selecting a group to target for potential mentors, it is necessary to take into account the role that they need to fulfill for the mentees, and pay attention to personal characteristics that mentors are desirable to possess, capacity to develop skills relevant to mentoring, but also personal experiences that may be relevant to the successful completion of their future role.

In addition to these qualitative features, it is also necessary to pay attention to the **age** of potential mentors, given that these are peer support programs. In practice, this means that the mentor should ideally be older than the mentee but not more than five years older.

Resources required

Given the nature of the program and the central focus on mentoring activities (which usually do not have a permanent form and do not use some permanent space), peer mentoring pro-

grams are quite cost-effective and **flexible** in terms of spatial and technical resources.

There are no fixed requirements regarding the resources required to run the program. It is expected that the program will require the use of designated space for peer mentor training and supervision, as well as for group activities with mentees.

Technical resources follow the usual "training needs" and depend on the choice of approach in the training of mentors and the selection of joint activities.

When it comes to **human resources**, the situation is somewhat more complex but also clearer. For program implementation purposes, in addition to program management resources, it is necessary to include experts who have the capacity to train peer mentors, as well as those with expertise to conduct supervisory sessions for mentors throughout the program.

In addition, it is significant that there is a mentor coordinator who will monitor whether all mentoring activities are carried out as planned and who will represent the organizational support in their implementation. In addi-

tion, it is possible to involve volunteers in supporting the program through engaging in group activities and in helping to organize individual mentoring meetings for mentors and mentees.

Depending on the specific activities in which mentors and mentees participate, **community resources** that may be of use and importance during the implementation of the program should be considered.

When it comes to **financial resources**, in addition to the resources for running the program and providing support to mentors, and the organizational aspect of the program and its evaluation, it is necessary to count on the costs that mentors and mentees will incur during the implementation of the program, since mentoring alone (primarily developmental) realizes through joint participation of mentors and mentees on activities of various character (fun, sports, educational, creative, practical (eg. in the construction of a pallet table) etc.).

It is not advisable to put mentees and mentors on their own to bear the costs of all their joint activities, as this creates a risk for continuity of activities, motivation of participants and dropout

due to lack of financial resources.

The proposed modality is to determine the amount at which the mentor and mentee are available for every meeting, and in relation to that information they can plan activities and decide whether they want to participate with their own funds in some particular activities.

For the purpose of providing additional support it is advisable to include **community fundraising** for this aspect of the program, and to activate community resources that can contribute to the program either through additional financial support or through the provision of services and goods free of charge. In addition, it is advisable to plan some resources for the completion phase of the mentoring process, since it involves organizing a celebration for mentors and mentees.

PROGRAM PHASES

As noted previously, one cycle of peer mentoring programs consists of the following successive phases: Preparation, Implementation, and Evaluation.

In order to further elaborate the steps, the following example will be taken of the program being developed by [CEPORA - Center for Positive Youth Development](#).

It is a program aimed at supporting young people without parental care who have left or are in the process of leaving institution-based or foster care, where a peer mentoring program created on the basis of the recommendations presented in this guide is one component of the support.

Preparation

The preparation phase actually covers all those activities aimed at setting up the program. At this stage, relevant [partners](#) from the system are mapped according to the selected segment of the target group of youth in the social welfare system. Contacts are established, program relations are regulated through co-operation protocols or other forms of defining mutual roles in the program, and a communication plan is created for all target groups. A detailed program timeline is created and the roles and responsibilities of all

program participants are defined.

In addition, it is important to define the [type](#) of mentoring in relation to its objective (developmental or instrumental), given the significant differences in resources, expertise and mentoring flow required for the two types.

The planned peer mentoring program is, in its form, a formal mentoring program. However, the program we will present through the guide seeks to

“keep” the benefits of both formal and informal peer mentoring. In other words, it seeks to achieve the **quality** of mentoring relationships that accompanies informal mentoring, and to provide **support** to mentors and mentees provided through the formal elements of the program. In addition to all this, promotional materials are being prepared at this stage, which will be used in communication with target groups, partners and the public.

The duration of the phase and its constituent elements depend on the capacity and networking of the organization in the community where the program is planned to be implemented. On average, it is necessary to spend two to three months for this phase of the program. With respect to the peer mentoring program implemented by CEPORA, the elements described are presented in the table below.

Segment of the target group of youth in the social welfare system

Youth without parental care from the territory of Belgrade who have left or are in the process of leaving institution-based accommodation or foster care.

Defining the type of mentoring in relation to the goal

Developmental mentoring;
Instrumental mentoring.

Mapping significant contributors in the community

Center for the Care of Infants, Children and Youth Belgrade;
Center for Foster care and Adoption Belgrade;
Youth Association "My Circle";
City Center for Social Work.

Defining mutual roles in the program

Meetings with representatives of institutions;
Sending of a formal letter;
Creating cooperation agreements.

Defining roles and responsibilities

Roles distribution within the organization;
Development of role definition documents for all hired associates;
Defining time dynamics and deadlines;
Preparation of administrative forms for the programming cycle.

Develop a communication strategy for the program

Mapping of target groups for communication on program activities;
Defining the dynamics and channels of communication;
Planning of promotional material.

Production of promotional material

Design and development of promotional leaflets for potential mentors;
Design and development of promotional leaflets for young people;
Design and development of information brochures for associates from institutions.

Implementation

The Implementation phase involves the implementation of a series of **sub-phases** that follow the process of selecting mentors, connecting them with mentees, conducting mentoring activities and ending mentoring. These include screening potential mentors, training them, then making an engagement decision, followed by pairing with mentors, conducting activities, mentor supervision, and termination of the mentoring process.

Depending on the organization's resources and capacity, as well as the planned scope of the program, some of the sub-phases may also be skipped, which will be specifically indicated. The implementation phase lasts an average of **14 to 20 months**, depending on the length of the mentoring activities and the duration of each sub-phase.

Recruiting

The recruiting sub-phase refers to the process of finding potential mentors. Therefore, it practically

represents the detailed development of the target group of peer mentors. When planning this sub-phase, it is extremely important to think about the specificities of the target group of mentees, the role of the mentor, and the personal capacities and skills that contribute to the successful realization of mentoring activities.

However, this is also one of the stages that can be **skipped** in the process. For example, if an organization has a volunteer base that it wants to use as peer mentors and does not want to expand the list of mentors to other young people, it will immediately go to the sub-phase of screening.

However, given the specifics of the experiences of youth in the social welfare system, and their often present feelings that only **"one of them"** can truly understand them, it is important to include other young people from the social welfare system as potential peer mentors. This is especially so if developmental

mentoring is planned, where the role of mentors as role models for young people is further enhanced. The CEPORA recruitment plan is shown in the table below.

<i>Target group of mentors</i>	<i>Recruitment channel</i>	<i>Method of recruitment</i>
Youth without parental care who have left the social welfare system	"My Circle" Youth Association	Direct contacts; Telephone applications; Online forms.
Youth with a background in Social Sciences	Cepora's volunteer base	Email contacts; Online forms.
Youth from the general population	Cepora's base of youth program participants	Direct contacts; Contacts through social networks; Online forms.

Screening

Screening involves assessing the individual eligibility of a mentor. In the previous sub-phase, the categories of mentors were selected and, with additional support, were expected to adequately respond to the needs of youth from the social welfare system for which the program is planned.

In the sub-phase of screening, the available documentation on potential mentors is evaluated, so-called "inbound" interviews are conducted, and skills development capacities are analyzed. Even if organizations choose to recruit mentors from among their members or volunteers, it is desirable that the screening phase be conducted in order to view the capacities and skills of the potential peer mentor from the perspective of his or her future role. When it comes to the CEPORA program, screening is done through analysis of mentor applications and inbound interviews. However, there is no elimination of mentors at this stage, but also the next sub-phase – training is used to further assess the individual eligibility of the mentor.

Training

This phase can only be skipped in a hypothetically ideal situation where the organization already has trained peer mentors. However, even then, it is difficult to expect that trained mentors are also aware of all the specifics of the specific target group targeted by the mentoring program.

Even if the first cycle of the program has already been implemented and some of the same mentors are involved in the next cycle, the training is useful not only for checking up on the mentors, but also for introducing them to new mentors, creating the basis for later horizontal support between the mentors themselves and the opportunity for continuous work on themselves. The task of the trainer is to adjust the content of the training, in accordance with the experience of the mentors, before deciding to skip this sub-phase.

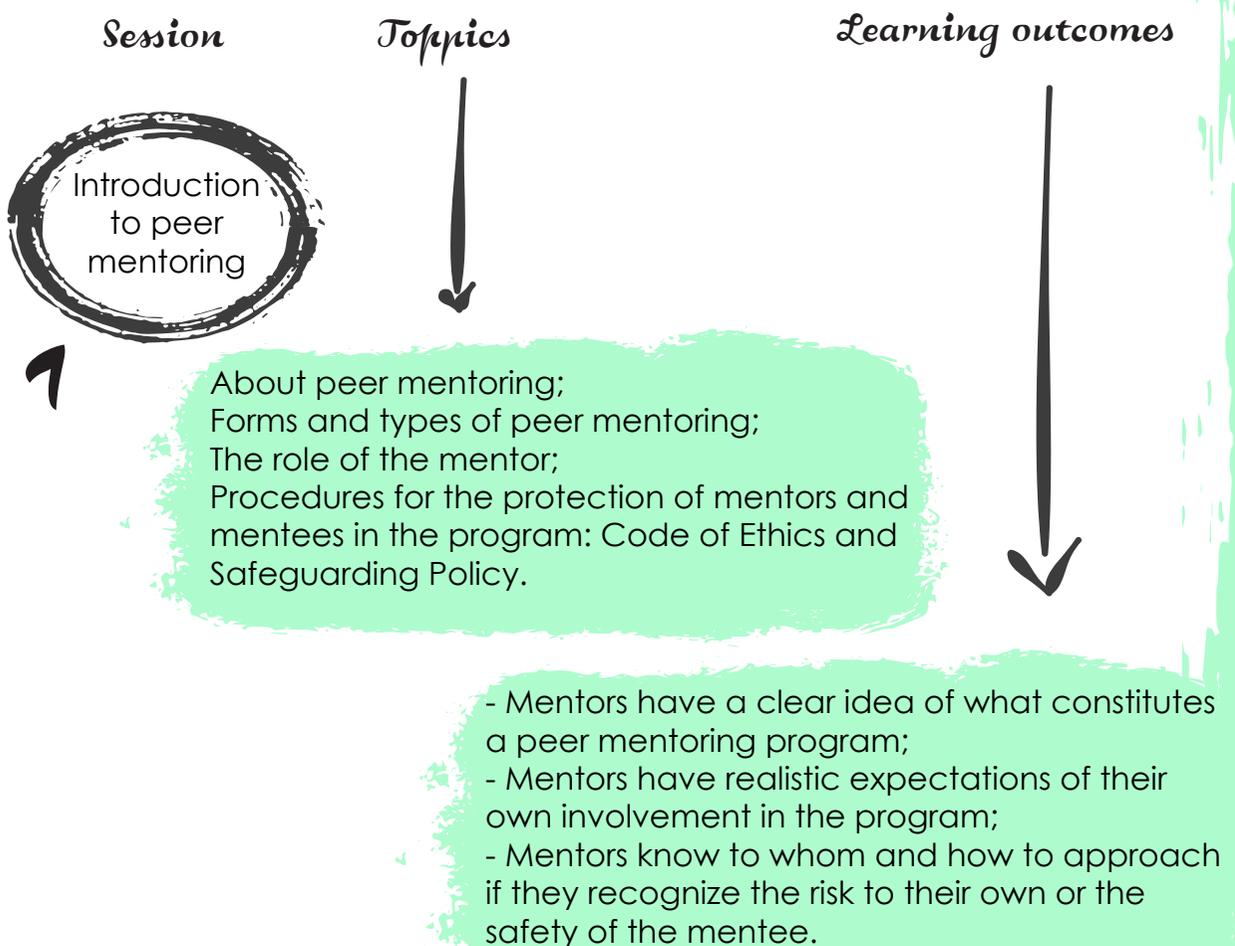
There are significant differences in the requirements when it comes to preparing mentors for the implementation of developmental mentoring, and when preparing for implementing instrumental mentoring activities.

Preparing a mentor for instrumental mentoring can take less time and is focused on establishing a quality relationship with a young person, setting realistic goals and transferring knowledge.

Preparing mentors for developmental mentoring is more complex and comprehensive. In order to respond to the needs of the mentee and to prepare the mentors for their role, it is necessary for the training to be realized

in multiple sessions, with each session lasting several hours.

The training elements developed under CEPORA program are shown below. There are 8 training sessions that take place over four weeks, covering two working days per week. Each session is conducted over a period of 3 working hours. The training is designed to cover elements of importance for both developmental and instrumental mentoring.



Session

Topics

Learning outcomes



2

Characteristics of youth without parental care;
Specificity of the transition period when leaving institution-based accommodation or foster care;
Specific features of youth functioning in the social welfare system.

- Mentors do not have misconceptions about the target group of mentees;
- Mentors are prepared for the challenges of working with mentees;
- Mentors know the specifics of youth functioning in the social welfare system.



3

Analysis of the goals of peer mentoring;
Examples of peer mentor activities;
Distinguishing peer mentoring from typical aiding professions.

- Mentors have no misconceptions about their role;
- Mentors recognize the limits of their role;
- Mentors have a clear focus on the young person, not their position in social welfare.

Session

Topics

Learning outcomes

The mentor-mentee relationship

4

Discovering the specificity of the mentor-mentee relationship;
Examples of relationship building through concrete activities;
The issue of responsibility for the change;
The relationship between closeness and boundaries in the mentoring relationship.

- Mentors are sensitized to establish friendly relationships with mentees;
- Mentors are not at risk of taking on the role of "the savior" over the young person;
- Mentors recognize their own and others' responsibility in the mentoring process.

Peer Mentor Skills 1
Communication

5

Non-verbal communication;
Active listening;
Reflecting and asking questions

Improved communication skills of mentors

Session

Topics

Learning outcomes

Peer Mentor
Skills 2
Emotions

6

Empathy;
Trust;
Mutual appreciation

Improvements are the emotional intelligence skills of the mentor.

Peer Mentor
Skills 3
Resourcefulness

7

Initiation of activities;
Connecting skills;
Setting goals;
Problem solving;
Decision making.

Mentors' social intelligence skills have been enhanced.

Session

Topics

Learning outcomes

Planning and managing the mentoring process

8

Simulation of mentor-mentee matching;
Simulation of the first meeting;
Planning activities;
Transfer of knowledge to mentees;
Preparation of the process of termination.

Mentors know how the mentoring process will look;
Mentors have realistic expectations of the course and outcome of the mentoring process.

The code of Ethics of Peer Mentors

9

Procedures for the protection and safety of mentors and mentees in the program;

Mentors know to whom and how they can talk to if they recognize risks for theirs or the safety of mentees.

Decision making

The next sub-phase is characterized by the final selection of peer mentors. The **decision** is made on the basis of all the information collected about the candidates, the additional assessment during the training, as well as the factors related to the mentors themselves, regarding the assessment of their free time, motivation after the training and willingness to work with the target group of mentees. A convenient means of checking these factors and the "last" interview before deciding is a **post-training interview**.

When it comes to the CEPORA program, it was decided that all eligible mentors make up the mentor base, that is, the number of mentors is not predetermined in relation to the number of mentees, but all those who have successfully completed the training and are estimated to have high probability to successfully perform the mentoring role.

What is important to point out is that there is a good chance that some potential mentors who, for some reason (whether objective like the amount of time they can give or subjective like assessing

their skills) may not meet the criteria for so-called "developmental" mentors, may still represent a significant resource for conducting instrumental mentoring activities.

Matching

In order to be matched with mentors, it is essential that there be a specific **pool** of young people who will be included in the program as mentees. Therefore, in parallel with the preparation of mentors through their training and selection, the selection of young people who will participate in the program needs to be happening.

In accordance with the needs of the particular young person, it is decided whether he / she will be required to have a mentor to carry out developmental or instrumental mentoring. In the case of instrumental mentoring, one looks at which of the mentors possesses the required knowledge / skill, but also assesses whether that particular mentor and specific mentees make a good match.

When it comes to development mentoring, the central focus is

assessing the compatibility of mentors and mentees. The matching is realized through several steps, and it is possible to change the initial connection before or during the subsequent program phases, ie to estimate that the created connection was not actually the most adequate.

Matching can be done on the basis of an assessment of **common interests, values**, as well as **personality traits** of mentors and mentees. Various youth-friendly exercises can be conducted for this purpose, through which the supervisor / trainer or a third party in charge of monitoring the matching process will obtain the desired information to help analyze suitable matches.

What is important to note is that this phase should by no means be carried out unplanned and ad hoc, such as on a first-impression basis - who sat with whom on the first activity or something similar. This significantly compromises the chances of successful mentoring and the realization of positive effects. The initial matching decision is followed by an **individual meeting** or a **group activity** attended by the mentor, mentee and the person in charge of monitoring the match-

ing. This activity serves as a confirmation of a good fit or an opportunity to change the decision, as well as for creating closer connection of mentors and mentees and establishment of basic trust, and for the basis for successful start of the mentor-mentee relationship.

In addition, this activity is also used to present basic information about the program itself, its duration and dynamics, so that all participants have realistic expectations. Furthermore, a joint meeting is also used to plan the first joint activities so that the young people involved get support if they need it for these first steps.

At the end of the meeting, a symbolic **agreement** on cooperation between mentors and mentees is signed, confirming the willingness of both parties to participate in the process.

Conducting activities

After matching and making the final decision to start the mentoring process, a series of activities begins. And in this sub-phase, there is a significant difference between developmental and

instrumental mentoring.

Mentors and mentees who set an **instrumental goal** for their activity will adapt the activities to the goal itself. For example, if the goal is to master a specific computer program, the activities will be related to mastering the program. Simple as that.

However, if the process of **developmental mentoring** is ongoing, the central focus will be the mentor-mentee relationship itself, and a variety of activities will be implemented through which participants will build and strengthen their friendly relationship. Most often, the activities are initially chosen in accordance with the interests of both parties (for example going bowling), or involve introducing into some new experiences one of the parties (for example climbing an artificial rock).

Meetings should be chosen in such a way as to allow for a joint activity, to occasionally give the mentee the opportunity to achieve some success, and to leave his or her comfort zone in a safe and caring environment. However, this does not mean that mentoring activities are conducted solely in a fun context. A mentor should be a trusted young person, supportive

and a role model. Therefore, mentoring activities will often include solving certain very specific and practical issues of importance to the mentee (such as completing a job application, going to an institution to retrieve an ID, repairing a home element). Also, the mentor should be free to include the mentee in some of his / her problematic activities in order to foster mutual respect and mutual trust in the abilities of both parties in the process.

One of the important topics to mention here is getting to know a mentor with **significant others** in the life of a mentee such as a close family member, best friend or partner. These activities are supported in mentoring programs, given that the mentor represents a significant person in the life of the mentee with whom that young person spends a significant amount of time. Therefore, encounters with important persons in the life of the mentee are important in two respects. The first is the desire of the young person themselves to introduce the mentor to their loved ones, which speaks to the quality of the friendship they have achieved and the importance of the mentor. Therefore, it is relevant to acknowledge the importance of mentoring by

organizing such meetings.

Another aspect is the care of the young person's environment, and the desire to get to know the person with whom the young person is spending time. When it comes to this topic, it is important to **prepare** a mentor for these meetings. In addition, it is extremely important to understand that, while significant others have "insight" into the mentor through a mutual encounter, the mentoring relationship remains a mentor-mentee relationship – significant other persons should not be involved in mentoring activities on a regular basis or influence to their flow.

During developmental mentoring, it is possible for the mentor and mentee to work towards a number of **smaller goals**, some of which will be instrumental. This in no way threatens the mentoring relationship, but only contributes to the quality of mentoring, as it puts the mentor and the mentee in a situation of joint mastering of a certain knowledge / skill, and contributes to the dynamics of the relationship, its deepening, but also testing how obstacles and potential disagreements between the mentor and the mentee are overcome. Setting instrumental goals can also be of

great relief at the very beginning of mentoring, as it is often easier for young people to focus on **specific tasks** in the early stages of the program when they do not yet have confidence in their mentor. In these situations success in mastering the first common goal is used to motivate the young person, to appreciate the joint work, and to set further developmental goals.

The peer mentor coordinator in this sub-phase has the role to **monitor** the implementation of the activities, their dynamics and the selection of the activities themselves, and to assist the mentors in organizing the activities and connecting them with various resources in the community.

The preferred **dynamic** of the meetings is once a week, but it is determined on a case-by-case basis, according to the needs and time of the mentor and mentee. However, activities should not be carried out less than twice a month, as then the risk of significant dilution of the meetings and the collapse of the relationship are at risk.

Supervision

When it comes to developmental mentoring, supervision is one of the **mandatory elements** of the program. Supervision can be conducted by the same experts who conducted the training or new, specially selected associates to provide support during the program. If new associates are involved, it is advisable for them to participate in mentor training sessions, so that the mentors can familiarize with them and develop a basic trust in them.

Supervision sessions should be held throughout the program, in accordance with a pre-established plan. Ideal dynamics include meeting **once a month**, and should not happen less than once every two months. This is especially specific with peer support, and supervision serves to support mentors and ensure that they do not take in "more" than what they can take, and that they are staying within their role.

Supervision can be organized through individual or group sessions with mentors. The benefits of **group supervisory meetings** are reflected in the horizontal

exchange of experiences, reflections, challenges and solutions by the mentors themselves, with the supervisors help and guidance. This type of support greatly contributes to the further strengthening of the relationships between the mentors themselves, the sense of community and the reduction of feelings of isolation and loneliness in the field by individual mentors.

On the other hand, **individual supervision** provides an opportunity for more detailed insight into the needs and work of each individual mentor, and also gives the supervisor greater control over the process, the opportunity to open up some sensitive topics that are not suitable for group work, as well as to strengthen the mentor's sense of confidence in the supervisor.

What kind of supervisory support an organization will carry out for its mentors remains its choice, however, the most effective combination is using **both approaches**, ie providing group and individual support for mentors, in order to "reap" the benefits of both and to provide the mentors with the highest quality support .

Through supervisory meetings, mentors are supported through

informing, problem-solving, additional empowerment through encouragement, counseling.

However, supervision also serves to **monitor** the work of mentors and to analyze their safety and security, maintaining healthy boundaries, regularity of meetings, and satisfaction of participants.

An important segment of supervision is the recognition of situations in which a mentor emerges from his / her role and enters the role of another professional helper (such as a psychotherapist or psychiatrist). In these cases, supervisor interventions should go in the direction of empowering mentors to encourage young people to look for the right kind of support at the right address, to get really adequate help and support, and to keep mentors "from taking on" other than their own responsibility.

Termination

The termination of the mentoring process, although the final sub-phase, is extremely significant and in no way should it be approached unprepared. There are a number of examples of programs that ended in a rough

cut of activities and whose evaluations show that such an end has eroded the positive effects of the program. Therefore, the completion of the mentoring program is **planned from its inception**. Preparations for this are also made during the training of the mentor. Then the planned dynamic is presented to both mentors and mentees during introductory meetings. Subsequently, as the process progresses, the time and developmental dynamics of mentoring meetings are monitored.

As a rule, instrumental mentoring lasts as long as it takes to master a specific knowledge / skill and ends upon achieving that goal. Developmental mentoring, on the other hand, has the more difficult task of determining the duration and timing of completion. The best practice examples are that the mentoring process itself lasts from six months to a year. Shorter than six months calls into question the possibility of achieving developmental goals, and the duration of more than one year risks the emergence of counter-effects and the development of so-called dependence on support in a young person.

In the CEPORA program, the termination plan for develop-

mental mentoring, in addition to introductions during training and initial activities, is organized as follows:

- Through supervisory meetings, it is verified that the mentoring process is ongoing, and changes in mentors and changes made with the mentees are mapped;

- At the beginning of the fifth month of mentoring, a cross-section is made with the mentors, and it is assessed where the young person is in terms of the goal set at the beginning of the mentoring. This meeting with the mentors assesses whether the goal has been achieved or whether the mentoring process needs to be extended, and how many more months will be spent in the specific case;

- If it is estimated that the goal has been achieved, the sixth month is dedicated to the termination of the mentoring – discussing the next steps with the young person and planning final activities with the mentor;

- If it is estimated that more time is needed to reach the goal, the extension of the mentoring process will be discussed with the young person and an approximate timeframe for the extension will be agreed;

- The evaluation process is repeated one month before the end of the agreed mentoring period. If it is assessed that the objective has not been achieved, other forms of support that may be offered to the young person, which would more adequately address their needs, are considered. If the goal is met, the last month is dedicated to termination of the mentoring – discussing the next steps with the young person and planning final activities with the mentor;

- During the final activities, it is important to summarize the joint process and to highlight the successes achieved during the mentoring period;

- After the first six months, a final celebration is organized with all the mentors and mentees who have completed their joint process during this period. It is important that all couples participate in a particular celebration of the process they have gone through. Therefore, if there is no possibility of organizing a celebration for a large number of mentoring couples (for example, for a couple who completed their activities after 8 months and other active couples are still working for 2 months afterwards), it is necessary to organize individ-

ual celebrations – where the participants are mentor and mentee, but also the supervisor and other personnel known to the young person from the program appear who will congratulate both the mentor and the mentee on shared successes;

- In some cases, the mentoring process may be terminated due to the failure of one of the parties, or due to the occurrence of certain irreconcilable differences between the mentor and the mentee. In these cases, it is advisable to organize closing meetings where, with the supervisor, the activities and the process will be summarized, and the completion of the process in dispute will be prevented. In addition, it may be possible to consider matching the young person with another mentor or directing the young person to another form of support in the organization or in the community.

Ending the peer mentoring process does not necessarily mean ending the mentor-mentee relationship. If these two young people have established, developed and maintained a quality relationship that relationship will naturally turn into a friendship after the program, and they will continue to see each other, but

on their own dynamics, which may be more frequent or less frequent than the one that existed during the program. Some relationships weaken over time, some become even stronger after the formal elements of the program are "removed".

It is important to note that all options are ok and **on the table**, and that both parties choose and consider the quality of the relationship they want to maintain. Mentors are under no formal obligation to the mentee, nor are the mentees obliged to further include the mentor in their activities and inform them about their progress. However, in practice, **friendships** are most often achieved, which, in various forms, are further maintained throughout the life of the mentor and the mentee.

Evaluation

The evaluation of the program should be organized in accordance with the capacity of the organization. The minimum is an examination of the effects achieved with mentees as well as the effects achieved on peer mentors. These effects can be examined through focus groups with participants, or through individual interviews.

In addition to mapping the effects, it is necessary, in accordance with the specifics of the peer mentoring programs, to pay special attention to the analysis and evaluation of the importance of the **relationship** between mentors and mentees and the general satisfaction of participants with the entire program.

A more comprehensive draft of the evaluation can cover a detailed analysis of the effects in accordance with the set goals and quality of the achieved mentoring relationship through the implementation of initial assessments with young people and mentors, and comparing the results on the examined items at the end of the process.

In addition to mentors and mentees, it is possible to include a supervisor and the mentor coordinator as sources of data on the effects achieved on these two target groups.

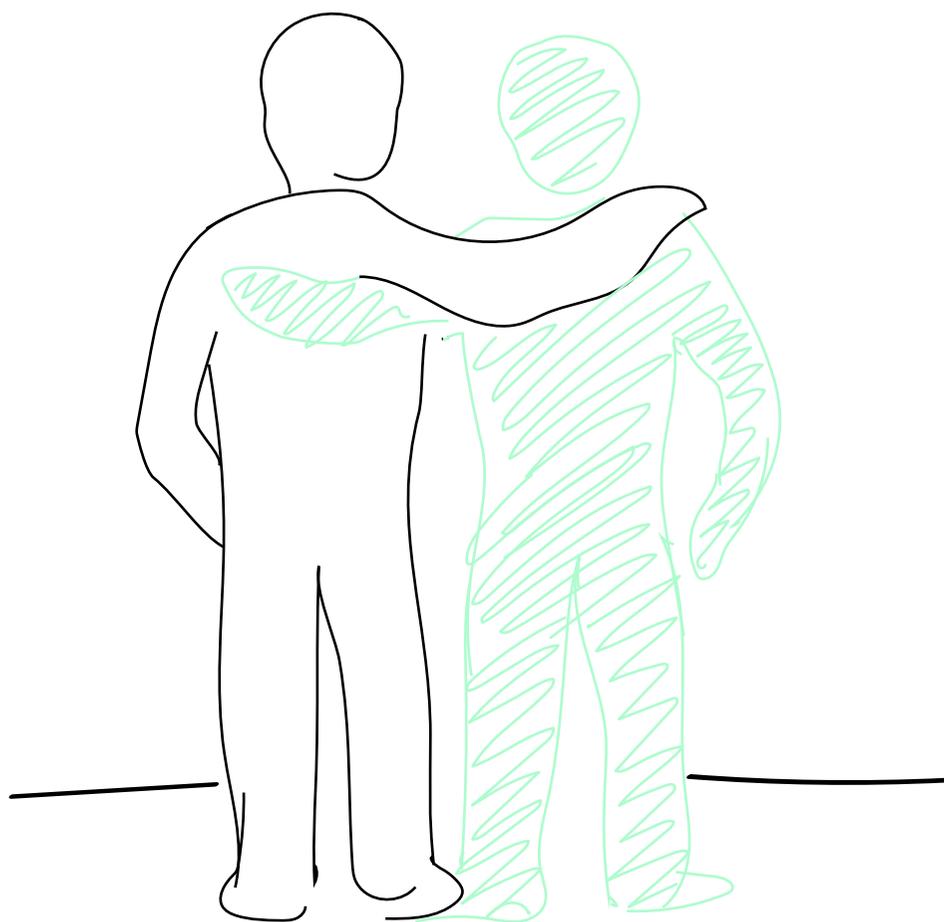
Also, all **associates** involved in the program should participate in the evaluation of the program process, in order to analyze all its aspects and to create a plan for the improvement of the program for the next cycle. The evaluation should follow all phases of the program in order to draw adequate conclusions about the progress and effects of the program.

Therefore, an evaluation plan should be created **before** the implementation of the program begins, data should be collected on a regular basis for the duration of the program, and the effects should be measured further upon its completion.

A special place in the evaluation of peer mentoring programs is occupied by the formal organization of meetings of mentors and mentees **six months after** the implementation of the program.

These meetings have a dual function. They function as a booster session for young people, enhancing the effects of the mentoring program.

On the other hand, these meetings provide an opportunity for follow-up of young people and for assessing the sustainability of the effects of the program.



SECTION 3

Model of the Peer Mentoring Program for Youth in the Social Welfare System – Hungary:

Youth care through the social welfare system in
Hungary

Proposal of a “Hungarian” model for peer
mentoring programs for youth in the social
welfare system

YOUTH CARE THROUGH THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM IN HUNGARY

About the child and youth protection system in Hungary

Child and youth protection is a system of activities, legislation and institutions aimed at promoting the upbringing of children in the family, preventing and eliminating their vulnerability, and providing substitute protection and care for children who are displaced from their families as a result of an official action.

The general rules and system of child protection are set out in Act XXXI of 1997 on the Protection of Children and Guardianship Administration Act- commonly known as the **Child Protection Act**.

In accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Child Protection Act puts the best interests and rights of the child first, giving priority to upbringing in the family. To this end, it provides a wide range of different benefits for the family and the child and only allows for removal from the family as a last resort, but still identifies family care as a priority.

The Child Protection Act makes a clear distinction between official work and services. First is the official decisions concerning the fate of the child and the family -

e.g. displacement from the family and reinstatement; appointment of a guardian, decision on adoption - means what the guardianship authority (registrar, guardianship office) does; and secondly, the different types of services that families and children in need can use.

The Child Protection Act also separates the two types of **services**: basic child welfare services available to all families, and special child protection services providing care for children excluded from the family.

The operation of the child protection system is a state and local government task, in which non-governmental organizations, church organizations and individual entrepreneurs also participate.

In addition to the above organizations, a number of other organizations are also responsible for the protection of children, which are obliged to report if they detect any situations that could intervene with the child's benefit to the district child welfare. These bodies include, but are not limited to, the Child Health Service; various public educational institutions; family support services; the police; the prosecution; the victim support service; non-gov-

ernmental organizations in contact with children; but any citizen can and even is required to report if he or she detects child abuse or other threats.

The protection of children is ensured by benefits in cash and in kind, basic care services, personal care services and official measures.

The operating structure of the **child protection signaling system** can be found in more detail here:

https://www.parlament.hu/documents/10181/1202209/Infojegyzet_2017_27_gyermekved%20elmi+jelzorendszer.pdf/104dd04a-dca3-47bc-944e-bfb07067676f

Caring for young people in Hungary's social welfare system

The law covers the provision of specialized child protection services for children who are temporarily or permanently displaced from their families. The range of specialized personal care services includes home care, aftercare and regional child protection services.

Levels of the child protection measures:

- All child and family benefits
- Special care for children and families
- Care and monitoring coordinated by the child welfare service
- Protection and obligation
- Temporary displacement of the child from the family voluntarily or by obligation
- Permanent or long term displacement of the child from the family

Methodological Child Protection Service

The **Methodological Child Protection Service** (formerly known as the Regional Child Protection Service, TEGYESZ) is a significant and important type of institution. The Special Service is the only institution, although not maintained or contributed to by the districts, which the district guardianship authority can use and

commit to its activities without restriction. The Special Service is a kind of information and care institution, which its complex system of tasks makes it a key player in the child protection network. Every **LOCAL** territorial child protection service is in charge of the following **responsibilities**:

- operation of an institution-based care providing temporary accommodation for children (shelter home) based on the decision of the maintaining municipality,
- operation of a committee of experts on child protection,
- making the decision of where will the care for the child be provided,
- operation of a foster families

- network,
- preparation for foster care and preparation for adoption,
- human resources management of guardianship advisers, professional guardians, and ad hoc guardians,
- professional, methodological assistance (supervision) for the performance of employees

Social welfare services in Hungary

Benefits in **cash** and in **kind**: The purpose of benefits in cash and in kind is to prevent and reduce the financial vulnerability of children, to prevent a child from having to be removed from the family solely because of the poor financial situation of the family.

- Regular child protection discount
- Additional child protection support
- Kindergarten attendance support
- Extraordinary child protection allowance
- Advance child support

- Home creation support
- Child feeding and textbook support, school supplies, tuition support, reimbursement fees for health care, etc.

Information on benefits in cash and in kind is provided by services and can be provided by social offices at the municipality.

Read more here: [https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A0600063.KOR_63/2006. \(III. 27.\) Government Decree on the detailed rules for claiming and establishing and provide social benefits in cash and in kind.](https://net.jogtar.hu/jogszabaly?docid=A0600063.KOR_63/2006. (III. 27.) Government Decree on the detailed rules for claiming and establishing and provide social benefits in cash and in kind.)

Basic child welfare care: Primary child welfare care contributes to the physical, intellectual, emotional and moral development of the child, to the promotion of his or her upbringing in the family,

to the prevention and elimination of the established vulnerability, and to the prevention of the displacement of the child from the family.

The Child Welfare Service

The **TASK** of the child welfare service is:

- Personal assistance to children
- Prepare a study on the environment of the child on request
- Initiate the introduction of new benefits
- Provide the premises necessary for the work of the children's rights representative
- Assistance in the performance of child protection tasks in educational institutions
- Organizing and operating the foster family network
- Keeping records of foster families/ foster parents
- Providing or arranging for access to a conflict management service
- Participation in the work of the Forum for Cooperation on Drug Issues defined in a separate legal act

The task of the child welfare service in order to **prevent vulnerability** is:

- Operation of detection and signaling system
- Exploring the causes of vulnerability
- Cooperation with the members of the signaling system
- Information on operating foster families and the possibility of placing the child in it with the intention of contributing to the adoption
- Organizing trans-professional case discussions
- Organize an annual child protection meeting

The task of the child welfare service in order to **eliminate the developed vulnerability**:

- Facilitate the resolution of family conflicts

- Solving the child's problems through social work with the child and his or her family
- Compensating for family dysfunctions
- Counseling: Counseling for family planning, education, mental health, legal and prevention of harmful passions, among others
- Initiate health and social care interventions
- Preparation of a care and education plan for the protected child
- Proposing the displacement of the child from the family

The task of the child welfare service in order to return a child displaced from his or her family:

- Family care, thus facilitating the reintegration of the child into the family
- Providing an aftercare social worker for the child's reintegration into the family

Child protection services are available **free of charge** in Hungary.

PROPOSAL OF A „HUNGARIAN” MODEL FOR PEER MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR YOUTH IN THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM

Introduction to peer mentoring in Hungary

The **concept** of mentoring: The concept of mentoring is used in many areas of life today, but few know what the word means. According to the Hungarian Interpretive Handbook, it is equivalent to a paternal friend, protégé, and educator. In today's terminology, it refers to a person who, as an older and more experienced friend, teacher, or counselor, paternally helps provide good advice to some-

one. When it comes to **PEER** mentoring, we are introducing someone who does have more experience and can be a positive model to the young person, but is closer with the age and experiences with the mentee than the traditional mentor.

Program participants

In Hungary, depending on the situation, **civil society organizations** can be appropriate service providers for peer mentoring program and could cooperate in the implementation of the program with other organisations. Depending on whether a nar-

lower target group has been chosen for each program, partnerships (formal and informal) between different community actors should be considered. These include: actors in the field of social welfare, such as family support centers, foster homes, youth protection organizations, foster care professionals, etc.

Stakeholders in education, such as secondary schools and universities - if this is how potential mentors are recruited; civil society actors to work together to develop the program or to provide resources to cover a specific element of the program (such as recruiting or reaching a target group of mentors, training and supervision of the chosen peer mentors). In line with available resources and existing partnerships with the program provider, consideration should be given to developing collaborative relationships with a number of other actors in the public, civil and business sectors, as appropriate.

Institutional partners

Institutional partners of the Peer Mentoring Program proposed for the situation in **Hungary**:

- Schools, Universities
- Child Welfare Service
- Local Governments
- NGOs
- Police

Institutional partners promote the program in schools, press, municipalities, and police. The social protection system in Hungary is very complex. The **MUST** in the reaching out to other partners for the implementation of a peer mentoring program involves including the **local social welfare service** in the program. They have to be the central coordinating body who will support all elements of the program. They will be included in the selection of the mentors and will be in charge of the supervision of the program.

Target groups

Mentees

Our goal is to support the social welfare beneficiaries of Hungary, ie the target group of young people enjoying the benefits of the mentoring program. Given the specificities of each institution that involves young people in the system and the analysis of their needs, we cannot undertake to involve all young people in need of support in the peer mentoring process.

The program is aimed primarily at young people who need urgent response and care, as **proposed by the competent institutions**, such as victims of trafficking, young people exposed to violence, etc.

Mutually supportive mentoring programs can also be helpful in working with these categories, but by no means in an acute situation. Their inclusion in the program is not aimed at resolving their situation, but rather has a supportive, self - reflective,

self-confidence-enhancing effect. This supportive personality development mentoring can achieve good results for young people without parental care (especially during the period of leaving institutional or foster care), young people with disabilities (especially when moving to the next school level), young people with behavioral problems who are recommend to the program by educational institutions (but then mentoring is not the only and basic form of intervention).

The peer mentoring coordinating organization should develop a program for youth segments in the social welfare system in line with its expertise, strategic commitment, and resources.

It is important that the coordinating NGO selects a youth target group according to its **resources**, because if you try to create a program for "all" young people, you run the risk of having difficulties in the organizational part of the program and not responding to the needs of the young people involved.

Mentors

Selection: The selection is the responsibility of the NGOs carrying the peer mentoring program, and the selection should be made based on a recommendation from the participants in the formal system.

When selecting mentors, preference will be given to:

- MA university students studying pedagogy and psychology
- Young social workers from other fields
- University students studying to be social workers
- Young healthcare workers
- Socially sensitive trained staff of NGOs

Developing a collaborative framework for peer mentoring

Time frame: Preparatory phase

Steps	Affected	Resources	Document
Defining the target group of young people in the social welfare system	family support centers in Budapest	Cooperation Agreement	Cooperation Agreement
Establishing the framework of the peer mentoring system	family support centers in Budapest	Aspects of the selection of mentors, Protocol for the preparation of mentors	Documents for targeted protocols
Contacting institutions relevant for the targeting of potential mentor candidates	Training institutions teaching pedagogy and psychology, Social workers from other fields, Universities in the social field	Cooperation agreement with partner institutions	Cooperation Agreement

Steps

Affected

Resources

Document

Develop a communication strategy for the program

collaborators supporting implementation

Design of promotional materials

Promotion plan and sample documents

Preparation of all participants for the program

Time frame: Preparatory phase

Steps

Affected

Resources

Document

Recruiting mentors

Universities, schools, child welfare services

promotional materials

flyers, contact information for online channels

Recruiting mentees

child welfare services, primary and secondary schools

promotional materials

flyers, contact information for online channels

Selection of mentees

child welfare services, primary and secondary schools

professional recommendation, exploration of the justification

justification documents

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Affected</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Document</i>
Training the mentors	mentors	Based on the training topics defined in the document	training description updated for the group
Selection and preparation of colleagues performing supervision	supervisor	Founding document based on specific tasks and powers	documents of the framework of selection and cooperation

Preparation and training of mentors

The minimum number of hours of preparatory training is **16 hours** and consists of 5 modules. The training program can also be completed in **electronic form**, partly in the framework of e-learning. In addition to the basic preparation course, the program also provides so-called professional training: **case discussion and supervision** during the mentoring process (3-6 months).

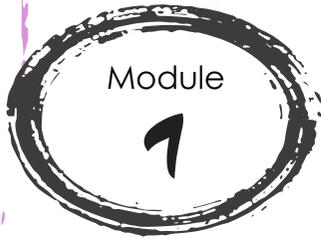
Supervisions and case discussions are led by professionals with the following competencies: social worker, social educator, andragogue, educator with experience in implementing social inclusion programs; or experience as a supervisor or psychologist and / or psychiatrist supervisor in a case discussion. In each case, professional experience in a similar field is an advantage.

The modules of the training package adapted to the peer mentoring work and the professional content of the program are the following:

Session

Topic

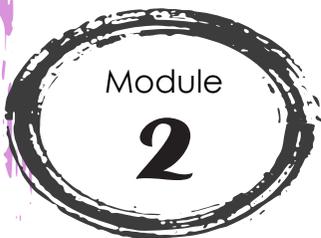
Description



Peer mentoring program background tasks

Information about the operation of the social and health care system, possible connection opportunities with different stakeholders during the implementation

- a detailed description of the program
- a detailed description of the activities expected in the program



Peer mentoring

Preparation of the participants of the program for peer mentoring, development of the supportive attitude and mentoring competencies of the future mentors, strengthening and practicing the methodology of adaptive learning and self-improvement practice.

Session

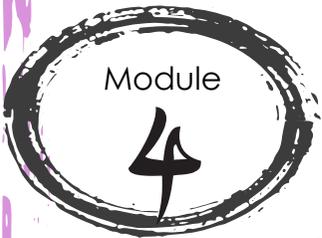
Topic

Description



Relationships

Connections and relationship-building training elements created during the program, developing a community building interface (common internet interface, mail system, etc.) that helps to share work experiences. Introduction to supervisors.



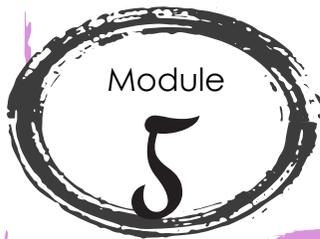
Communication and conflict management

Practicing methods of effective communication, with an emphasis on assertive communication. Identify conflicts, practice finding and effectively selecting possible solutions.

Session

Topic

Description



Developmental mentoring



Getting to know the main elements and tools of developmental mentoring in the framework of practical sessions, and practicing the way of preparing and applying an individual development plan.

Activities of the mentors

- Continuous presence among the target group, building a relationship of trust.
- Effective social assistance.
- Initiating an individual supportive conversation with a member of the target group at regular intervals for prevention and purposes of supporting her to use her time in a constructive way.
- Informing supervisors and social workers about the young person's development.

- To become a part of the signaling system for family caregivers, to participate in the establishment of professional relations.

The main **task** of the peer mentors in the proposed model for Hungary is to help the school progress and performance of the mentored young people, to develop the mentees individually, and to support their social integration.

To this end, the mentor, after assessing and mapping the situation of the young person, prepares an individual development plan based on the analysis and keeps an individual progress

diary in consultation with the young person involved in the program. Based on the **individual development plan** and the **individual progress diary**, in the presence of the supervisor, he / she evaluates the young person's progress and development every two months.

He / she maintains regular and personal contact with the young person he mentors, during which he deals with the individual meetings with the mentee for a minimum of 1 hour per week

If necessary, the mentor participates in a family visit with the young family he/ she mentored. In this case, the purpose of the family visit by the mentor is primarily for the parents to learn about the person their son/ daughter has been spending a lot of time with. This does not mean that the mentor will discuss about the mentoring process with the parents outside of what is comfortable for the mentee.

The content of the professional and methodolo- gical activity of the peer mentor

Mentoring in this case is the most effective support for the development of young people. In order to highlight strengths and work on the weaknesses, the development of the right and effective strategies and the development of the young person's personality and self-image is a primary task of the mentor.

Peer mentoring is a complex activity, a key element of which is the **relationship** between the mentor and the mentee. The process cannot work without getting to know the young person, exploring different environmental factors and socio-cul-

tural backgrounds. This can be done primarily through the establishment of a personal relationship based on **mutual trust**. During the mentoring, the participants enter into a kind of partnership. Personality development and the development of communication are key to helping young people. These areas are most effective in providing with **personal examples**, especially in personal relationships.

The effectiveness of working together depends in many ways on the mentor's success in establishing an informal relationship based on mutual acceptance and trust, in addition to formal contacts.

In the lives of people with multiple disadvantages, there are numerous situations and problems for which they do not have ready solutions due to their socio-cultural situation, although these often ordinary situations can be a direct consequence of certain life failures.

- Lack of self-esteem, self-knowledge
- Problems in solving life problems
- Dealing with strong emotions and moods
- Low confidence
- Lack of support

Individual development provides a way for ability and personality development to be personalized, based on an individual development plan. The good relationship established during the cooperation phase makes it possible for the individual meetings between mentor and mentee to have a real partnership quality, in which, of course, the more experienced partner leads and helps the development to move forward.

Targets met:

- Involvement in personal life planning.
- Formulate and launch agreed objectives.
- Continuous individual self-assessment, performance evaluation.

During the mentoring process, both mentor and the mentee can have their own **empowerment** in the following areas:

- Dare to speak and express their opinion.
- Transfer of learning methods and techniques.
- Improving goal setting.
- Helping the formation of opinions and the expression of opinions.
- Helping to develop effective, independent learning skills (transformation of habits, result-oriented solutions).

Although not a basic element in the case of peer mentoring, the development process can be made more efficient by organizing **group sessions**. It is also intended to help the mentee with a contemporary "support system".

Group sessions become more and more important when, as a result of individual development, mentees become more open and it is already possible to perform various developmental activities and tasks not only in a face-to-face situation with mentors. As a result of successful relationship building and individual development, the mentees already dare to express their opinion, they have enough confidence to try to get involved in solving a task.

The sessions organized for the small group offer a suitable space to speak in front of others, to take opinions and suggestions, and to develop self-confidence. These small group sessions are the next steps in strengthening independent living.

Another very important aspect in organizing group sessions is the development of cooperation, tolerance and social competencies in general, using activity-oriented, collaborative learning

techniques that can be organized in such a circle. The organization of these group sessions should be done with the support of the organizer of the peer mentoring process, but the initiative for the activity can, of course, come from the mentor.

Administrative background of the work of mentors

Mentors primarily run an **electronic documentation system**. During the work, the mentor prepares and maintains the following documents:

- Individual development plan
- Individual progress (mentoring) log
- Evaluation protocol

Individual development plan sample

In the following table, we present a simple sample for the plan that can be made for the next 2 months for the mentoring process. The social worker will help mentor and mentee to define the steps they want to reach for the following period. The social

worker is the one formally in charge of the assessment, but will take into account the inputs from the mentor, as well as from the mentee. This plan can be helpful if mentor and mentee want to work on some concrete, visible results.

Signature and status of invited parties (mentor, mentee, supervisor)

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Individual comments from the participants of the meeting about the mentee

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What specific tasks are planned for this period, based on the summative assessment?

Commitments of the participants – mentor and mentee, with timeline deadlines:

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Steps of the peer mentoring program

<i>Steps</i>	<i>Affected</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Document</i>
Developing a framework for youth mentoring cooperation	mentored young people	Cooperation Agreement	Mentoring assignment

Time frame: As defined in the project

Preparation of a schedule for the implementation of the tasks included in the individual development plan	mentee, mentor	Needs assessment	individual development plan, schedule
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Time frame: At the beginning of mentoring

Individual progress log. To examine the effectiveness of the mentoring methods used	mentee	diary, meeting documents	completed diary
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Time frame: Continuously, as defined in the project

Steps

Affected

Resources

Document

Group competence development programs based on an individual development plan (optional element)

mentee and mentor, involved professionals, peers

development plan

program design and development aids

Time frame: As defined in the project

The peer mentor keeps in touch with his/hers supervisor

supervisor, mentor

mandate, contact map

agreements, reminders

Time frame: Continuous during the mandate

The mentor evaluates the young person's achievements, development and the reasons behind them

mentee, mentor, supervisor

individual development plan, schedule, evaluation tools

custom progress log

Time frame: At least every 2 months

The mentor participates in supervision group discussion work

Interested professionals, supervisors

Methods of supervision

supervision protocol

Time frame: On an agreed schedule

Mentoring supervision

Supervision is the **obligatory** element of peer mentoring programs. Since the Hungarian model implies the participation of a social protection officer, he or she is the person responsible for the professional monitoring of the peer mentor and the mentee.

Supervision should be derived at least **once a month**, allowing mentors to have both individual and group meeting with their supervisor.

For the **modality** of the supervision, the social worker can use individual consulting meetings and case studies, group discussions, and can incorporate a several of modalities and methodologies for the group meetings – thus making them both educational and emotionally supportive for the mentors.

Evaluation of the mentee's results, developme nt and the reasons behind them

The suggestion for the Hungarian model is to have the evaluation for **every 2 months** of the program.

The social worker - th- supervisor, will organize the evaluation meeting with both the mentee and the mentor. In the table below we offer a sample for the evaluation protocol.and case studies, group discussions, and can incorporate a several of modalities and methodologies for the group meetings – thus making them both educational and emotionally supportive for the mentors.

Aspects of the observation:

• Based on the observations, a description, summary and detailed textual evaluation of the young person's behavior by a mentor.

• What are the strengths of the mentee on which we can base our work through future the collaboration?

• Which areas of cooperation were successful / failed? In which competence areas was there development / stagnation?

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SECTION 4

Conclusions and recommendations

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In the final chapter, we want to address the **specifics** of peer mentoring programs with youth in the social welfare system in relation to peer mentoring programs implemented with young

people in the general population, and to make specific **general recommendations** for organizations that choose to establish peer mentoring programs in their local communities.

Specificity of the program in relation to programs aimed at the general youth population:

- The establishment of programs can largely depend on the organization of youth care through the **national** social welfare system;
- In some cases, due to the status of beneficiaries of social welfare, it is necessary to establish and maintain cooperation with the **institutions of the system** when implementing the program;
- Establishing communication with the young people targeted

by the program is often more **demanding** than programs aimed at the general population. Depending on the segment of the target group chosen, it may sometimes be necessary to reach the target group of mentees through institutions or partner organizations;

- Young people from the social welfare system prefer to connect with other young people with similar **experiences**;
- Working with young people

from the social welfare system requires a complex [preparation](#) of mentors;

- The process of mentoring with youth in social welfare can face more frequent and complex

[challenges](#);

- Termination of the program may find greater [resistance](#) in some young people from the system.

Recommendations for organizations:

- Get acquainted with the national [legislative framework](#) in detail before establishing peer mentoring programs, in order not to encounter obstacles to program implementation;

- Investigate [ways of functioning](#) of institutions that you seek to establish cooperation with for the smooth implementation of the program, and accordingly plan ways of communication to those institutions and forms of cooperation that will be sought;

- [Get to know](#) in detailed the target group of mentees, and carefully plan the channels for program promotion and ways of involving young people in the program;

- It is extremely important and desirable to [recruit mentors from the social welfare system](#), whose experiences can be easily connected to mentees;

- Peer mentor training should include sessions aimed at [learning about the characteristics](#) of the target group of mentees, in order to break down the potential misconceptions of mentors about the mentees they will work with, as well as to further empower them to work in potentially challenging conditions;

- Supervision sessions should be conducted by [experts with experience](#) of working with young people in the social welfare system, and supervision itself should be organized in a way that responds to the needs of mentors for additional support;

- The termination of the program should be [planned, transparent and open](#), it should not slip into the trap of the young person experiencing the termination phase as abandonment.

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Excerpt from the reception of members of the youth association "My Circle"

Members of the youth association "My Circle" participated in the project "Peer Mentors in Action" as associate partners with whom the guide was tested and whose members have undergone training for peer mentors and are currently implementing a peer mentoring program in their organization.

"This guide for peer mentoring has been created in a way that makes it very easy to understand and use. The guide guides you through the whole process of peer mentoring from the very beginning to the end. The way of expression and the words in the guide are understandable and simple, there are no "professional" terms that no one has ever heard of. The guide is also specific in that it is rich in guidelines for direct work. This is of great importance because there are sometimes small boundaries and differences between what is acceptable and what is not. There are "yes" and "no" parts that clearly give guidance to a peer mentor when it comes to potential choices.

According to the experience of peer mentors who have already passed the training, it can be said that the best part of this guide is the description of what a peer mentor to a young person is and what he/she is not. As young people, peer mentors in the absence of experience may fall into confusion or even the illusion of responsibility and the position in which they find themselves. This guide has clearly defined guidelines on what it is advisable for a peer mentor to be along with their responsibilities, duties and tasks.

Another important part of the guide itself are the recommendations. If you pay attention to the recommendations themselves, it can be clearly seen that they were created and written based on experience. They are all tangible and very useful in the process of establishing the program. Recommendations are basically something you should pay attention to first."