MHOA Mentorship Program

GUIDE

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What is Mentorship?

Mentorship is a valuable and essential component of personal and professional growth. It is a professional relationship between two individuals built on trust and respect, where a more experienced and knowledgeable person (mentor) provides guidance, support, and feedback to someone less experienced (mentee). The purpose of mentorship is to foster a mentee's development by providing guidance, knowledge, and perspective from someone who has walked a similar path. Through this relationship, mentees can gain valuable insights and advice to help them make informed decisions and achieve their goals.

The mentorship relationship can be mutually beneficial. Mentors often find satisfaction in helping others succeed, and mentees gain valuable skills and knowledge that help them grow personally and professionally. Overall, mentorship is critical to helping individuals navigate their careers, develop new skills, and reach their full potential as public health professionals.

Benefits to Mentors

1. **Giving back**: Mentors find satisfaction in sharing knowledge and experience.
2. **Leadership development**: Mentors enhance leadership and communication skills.
3. **New perspectives**: Mentors gain new perspectives from mentees' diverse backgrounds.
4. **Personal and professional growth**: Mentors reflect on experiences and gain new insights.
5. **Career satisfaction**: Mentors find fulfillment in mentees' growth and success.

Benefits to Mentees

1. **Personalized guidance and support**: Mentees receive personalized advice, support, and practical resources to achieve their goals.
2. **Knowledge and skill development**: Mentees gain insights and guidance from mentors to develop new skills and knowledge.
3. **Career advancement**: Mentees receive guidance on career paths, job searches, and interview skills to advance their careers.
4. **Networking opportunities**: Mentees are introduced to professionals in their field, expanding their professional network and opening doors to new opportunities.
5. **Personal growth**: Mentees receive advice on personal and professional development, including goal setting, time management, and work-life balance.
6. **Feedback and accountability**: Mentees receive constructive feedback and are held accountable for their actions and decisions, promoting learning and better decision-making.
7. **Increased confidence**: Mentees receive support and encouragement, fostering increased confidence and self-esteem.

About the Local Public Health Mentoring Program

Background

The Massachusetts Health Officers Association (MHOA) is recognized by members and other agencies as an effective professional group representing and advocating for local public health and environmental health. MHOA leads, supports, and advocates for the delivery of statutory and foundational public health services across every municipality in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. MHOA informs, educates, and empowers its members to ensure healthy communities for all.

Foundational to MHOA's work is the belief that all people in Massachusetts should have equal opportunities to achieve their full health potential. This vision requires a robust public health system that can promote equitable health outcomes for everyone, regardless of their geographic location or circumstances. MHOA strives to embed this principle of equity into all of its initiatives, including advocacy and workforce development.

Maintaining high standards within public health work requires a skilled and competent workforce. However, over the last decade, the local public health workforce has shrunk by more than 15%, detrimentally affecting the ability to carry out essential public health services. In response to this workforce shortage, MHOA is establishing a Local Public Health Mentoring Program to support the existing workforce and while bolstering retention.

Program Description

MHOA introduced a pilot program for its Local Public Health Mentorship Program in 2023, initially focusing on a small mentee cohort consisting of early-stage local public health professionals. The development of this pilot program was a collaborative effort between MHOA members, local public health officials, and representatives from the Academic Public Health Corps (APHC), who formed a dedicated Steering Committee. The program design was also informed by investigative focus groups with potential mentors and mentees. In 2025, MHOA transitioned to focus on a larger mentee cohort consisting of local public health professionals at any stage of their career as well as individuals actively looking for a position in local public health.

To ensure meaningful mentor-mentee matches, the mentorship program will implement a participatory application process, which will consider the professional interests, goals, backgrounds, and geographic regions of mentors and mentees. Once matched, mentors and mentees will engage in a series of ongoing, monthly conversations over the course of 8 months. These conversations will serve as the cornerstone of the mentoring relationship, providing a platform for open communication, guidance, and knowledge-sharing between mentors and mentees.

Program Goals



1. Develop Skills and Knowledge

The program aims to enhance the skills and knowledge of mentees in the field of local public health. Mentors will provide guidance, feedback, and resources to help mentees build their expertise and capabilities.



2. Foster Career Development

Another important goal of the program is to support mentees in their career growth. Mentees can work on setting career goals, receive guidance on their career paths, and be introduced to new opportunities during their time in the mentorship program.



3. Create a Supportive Community

The program seeks to cultivate a supportive community within the local public health field. By fostering collaboration, networking, and knowledge-sharing among mentors and mentees, the program aims to create an environment where professionals feel valued, connected, and supported.



4. Build a Sustainable Workforce

The overarching goal of the mentorship program is to contribute to building a sustainable workforce in local public health. By developing skills, fostering career growth, and creating a supportive community, this program aims to enhance the retention and dedication of local public health professionals, ultimately ensuring long-term stability in delivering vital public health services.

Stages of Formal Mentoring Relationships

1

Matching

Mentor and mentee are matched based on their goals for the mentorship relationship, professional interests, backgrounds, and geographic region.

2

Relationship Building

The mentor and mentee begin to build a relationship based on trust, respect, and communication. Mentoring pairs meet regularly in person, virtually, or through other means of communication to discuss progress toward their goals and address any challenges.

3

Goal Setting

Mentor and mentee work together to establish specific goals for the mentorship relationship. These goals may focus on career development, specific skill development, or professional growth.

4

Evaluation

Throughout the mentoring relationship, both the mentor and mentee engage in regular reflection on the mentorship process. This reflective practice allows them to evaluate the effectiveness of the program and assess their progress.

5

Closure

The formal mentoring relationship concludes with the program's completion, but the mentor and mentee can choose to continue their relationship beyond this program.

Application and Matching Process

Qualifications

- **Mentors** are required to have **3 or more years** of experience in local public health.
- **Mentees** are to be either currently working or actively looking for a position in local public health
- Mentors and mentees must be willing and able to commit to a 8-month (January to August) mentoring relationship.

Local public health professionals interested in serving as mentors and mentees will complete the application form located on MHOA's website at menotrship.mhoa.com. The application collects information on the applicant's qualifications, current details, and requires the submission of a resume. Mentees will also be asked to specify some of their professional goals. Mentees will participate in a short 10 minute interview to explain expectations and gather more insight into their professional goals, expectations, and availability for this program.

Applications must be submitted to MHOA by **November 20, 2026.**

The matching process for the mentorship program is designed to ensure that mentees are paired with mentors who can provide them with the support they need to achieve their professional goals in local public health. Mentor and mentee applications will be carefully reviewed by the Mentorship Committee to create thoughtful pairings based on each mentee's goals and expectations for the program, as well as the mentor's professional experience and expertise.

Setting Expectations

To support relationship building within the mentorship relationship, the mentorship program has developed a Mentor/Mentee Agreement that should be completed during the first month's meeting. This agreement is a framework designed to help set expectations and guide conversations between mentors and mentees. It is not a legal or binding document, but rather a tool to facilitate a productive and positive mentoring relationship with accountability for both parties.

Having an agreement can be highly beneficial for mentors and mentees alike. By outlining goals, expectations, and communication preferences upfront, this agreement helps create a focused and effective mentoring experience. It also ensures that both parties are committed to the success of the relationship and willing to invest the necessary effort to achieve desired outcomes.

The agreement, provided on the following page, is meant to be a valuable resource throughout the mentorship program. It can be revised and updated as needed to reflect the evolving needs and goals of the mentoring relationship.

Program Expectations

- Mentors and mentees are expected to commit to the 8-month program and to their mentor/mentee match.
- Any personal or sensitive shared during the relationship is confidential unless otherwise agreed upon.
- Mentors and mentees should actively engage with each other through regular communication and meetings.
- Mentors and mentees are required to complete the Mentor/Mentee Agreement, outlining mutual expectations, goals, and boundaries.
- In-person meetings with mentor-mentee are encouraged
- Mentors and mentees should complete checkpoint surveys to provide feedback on their progress and the program's effectiveness.
- Mentors and mentees are encouraged to attend the MHOA Quarterly Meetings.

MHOA Mentor/Mentee Agreement

Confidentiality

Both mentor and mentee agree to maintain confidentiality regarding any personal or sensitive information shared during mentoring sessions, unless otherwise agreed upon. This includes but
is not limited to career aspirations, personal challenges, and work-related issues.

Goals

The mentor and mentee will work together to identify and set specific goals for the mentorship relationship. These goals may include, but are not limited to, improving the mentee's skills and knowledge, developing a career plan, building a professional network, and enhancing their leadership abilities. These goals will be reviewed regularly throughout the mentorship to ensure progress is being made. Use the *Goal Setting Framework* document to define their goals and outline an action plan to achieve them.

Duration

The mentoring relationship will begin October 2025 and continue for a period of 8 months. However, if both the mentor and mentee are interested in continuing the mentoring relationship beyond the initial 8-month period, they may choose to do so on a voluntary basis. If either the mentor or mentee encounters any challenges or concerns during the mentoring relationship, they are encouraged to engage in open and honest communication to identify the issues and work collaboratively to find a resolution. If the issues remain unresolved, either party may choose to end the mentoring relationship with appropriate notice to the other party.

Communication

Both the mentor and mentee agree to commit to regular and open communication throughout the duration of the mentoring program. This includes a scheduled meeting, at least once a month, in person or virtually, but may also include phone calls, or email correspondence, as agreed upon by the mentoring pair. The mentor and mentee will be respectful of each other's time and will make every effort to be punctual and prepared for any scheduled meetings or communication. If either party needs to reschedule a meeting or is running late, they will provide ample notice to the other person.

Responsibilities

The mentor responsibilities include:

- Providing guidance, support, and advice to their mentee
- Sharing their knowledge, skills, and experience with their mentee
- Helping the mentee set and achieve specific goals
- Providing constructive feedback to the mentee

The mentee responsibilities include:

- Being prepared for each meeting and bring any relevant materials or questions
- Being respectful of their mentor's time and schedule
- Setting specific goals and working towards achieving them
- Being receptive to feedback and guidance from their mentor

What Mentorship is NOT

Mentorship is not a substitute for a mentee's supervisor. Mentors provide advice and insights but do not have decision-making authority over the mentee's supervisor. Rather the mentor's role is to complement the mentee's existing professional support system. Moreover, mentorship does not excuse the mentee from following their community or organizational policies and procedures. The mentee remains responsible for adhering to guidelines and professional standards, and the mentorship relationship should align with and support those obligations.

Mentor Signature: _____Date: _____

Mentee Signature: _____Date: _____

Please remember that this agreement is a dynamic document and may be revised as necessary to reflect the evolving needs and goals of the mentorship relationship

Goal Setting

Goal setting plays a vital role in maximizing the benefits of a mentorship program. It enables mentees to establish a clear direction and focus, guiding their efforts throughout the program. By defining specific objectives, mentees can identify what they aim to achieve during their mentorship journey. This clarity ensures that the mentoring relationship can be tailored to their specific needs and allows mentees and mentors to concentrate their resources and efforts on the areas that are most important to the mentees' growth and development.

Additionally, goal setting provides mentees with a sense of purpose and serves as a reminder of their aspirations. By tracking their growth, mentees can assess their accomplishments, identify areas for further support, and celebrate their achievements along the way.

Setting goals also fosters accountability. Mentees take responsibility for their own progress and development, and goals provide a framework for evaluating their performance. By sharing their goals with their mentor, mentees invite guidance and support, establishing a sense of mutual accountability within the mentoring relationship. This alignment of goals between mentees and mentors enables them to work towards a shared purpose and ensures the effectiveness of the mentorship program.

The Goal Setting Framework Worksheet is a tool that can be used by mentees to help define mutually agreed upon goals and outline an action plan to achieve them. The worksheet can help mentees identify specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) goals and the steps and resources needed to achieve each one. The worksheet also allows for flexibility for individual goal setting and personalization based on the mentee’s specific needs and aspirations for the mentorship program.

Goal Setting Framework Worksheet

Self-Reflection

Self-reflection is a fundamental step in the goal-setting process. By engaging in self-reflection, mentees can gain deeper insights into their values, aspirations, strengths, and areas for growth. This introspective practice enables mentees to better understand themselves and sets the stage for effective goal setting. To facilitate meaningful self-reflection, mentees should consider the following prompts:

1. What are the values and passions that drive you? What aspects of your personal professional life bring you the most fulfillment and satisfaction?

or

2. What are your unique strengths and skills? What do you excel at, and how can you leverage these strengths to achieve your goals?

3. What are the areas in which you would like to grow and develop? Are there specific skills, knowledge, or experiences you seek to acquire during the mentorship program?
4. What is your long-term vision for your personal and professional life? How do you see yourself in the future?

5. What challenges or obstacles do you anticipate encountering on your journey? How can you proactively address or overcome these challenges?

SMART Goals

What are SMART goals?

Specific: A specific goal is clear, well-defined, and focused. It answers the questions:
What exactly do you want to achieve? Why is it important? Who is involved?
Measurable: A measurable goal has concrete criteria for tracking progress and determining success. It involves quantifiable or observable outcomes.
Achievable: An achievable goal is realistic and within your reach. It considers your resources, skills, and current circumstances. It should be challenging enough to motivate you, but not so overwhelming that it becomes unattainable.
Relevant: A relevant goal is aligned with your overall objectives, values, and the context of your mentorship program. It should have a direct impact on your growth, development, and desired outcomes.
Time-bound: A time-bound goal has a specific timeframe or deadline. It creates a sense of urgency and provides a timeline for action.

Goal Setting Template

Goal Description:

[Describe your goal in a specific and concise manner, highlighting what you aim to achieve.]

Timeline:

[Specify the timeframe or deadline for accomplishing your goal.]

Resources Needed:

[List the resources, tools, or support you will require to work towards your goal. This can include mentorship, training programs, books, or any other relevant resources.]

Measures of Success:

[Define how you will measure your progress and determine the success of your goal. Identify specific metrics, criteria, or indicators that will indicate your achievement.]

Tips:

- Prioritize goals based on importance and feasibility.
- Break down each goal into smaller, actionable tasks that will allow you to focus on specific actions that contribute to your overall goals. Each task should be clear, specific, and measurable.
- Establish deadlines or milestones for each task to track your progress effectively. Ensure that your deadlines are realistic and achievable within the available resources and timeframe.

Review and Evaluation

Periodically review and evaluate your goals. Assess your progress, identify any challenges or changes in circumstances, and adapt your goals accordingly. This flexibility ensures that goals remain realistic and achievable. Regular reflection will help you stay focused and make the most of your mentorship experience.

Program Checkpoints

Checkpoint surveys are an important tool in the program to evaluate and monitor the progress of the mentorship relationships. By establishing regular checkpoints throughout the mentorship program, MHOA can ensure that the mentoring pairs are receiving the support they need to succeed and make any necessary adjustments to better meet the needs of the participants.

The 3 checkpoint surveys will be administered to both mentors and mentees through brief 5-minute Google Surveys throughout the program. The survey results will be viewed by the program coordinator to monitor the progress of the mentorship relationships and evaluate the effectiveness of the program. While the surveys are primarily intended for program evaluation purposes, mentors and mentees are encouraged to discuss the surveys in their mentoring pairs to facilitate open communication and reflection on their progress. These discussions can help identify areas of strengths and opportunities for improvement and foster a more collaborative and productive mentoring relationship.

3-Month Checkpoint

Purpose: Focus on the initial progress of the mentorship relationship, such as whether the mentor and mentee have established a good rapport and have begun working on their goals

Sample questions:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with your mentor/mentee match?
2. Have you and your mentor/mentee been able to regularly communicate and meet?
3. Have you and your mentor/mentee been able to effectively discuss and work towards your mentoring goals?
4. Do you feel that your mentor/mentee is committed to the mentoring relationship and fulfilling their responsibilities as outlined in your mentorship agreement?
5. Are there any concerns or challenges you have faced in the mentoring relationship so far? If so, please describe them.

6-Month Checkpoint

Purpose: Evaluate the progress made towards achieving the goals and objectives established at the start of the mentorship relationship and identify any areas where additional support or resources may be needed

Sample questions:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the mentoring relationship so far?
2. Have you and your mentor/mentee been able to regularly communicate and meet?
3. Have you and your mentor/mentee been able to make progress towards the mentoring goals you set at the beginning of the program?
4. Are there any goals that have not been met yet? If so, what steps do you plan to take to achieve them?
5. Are there any concerns or challenges you have faced in the mentoring relationship since the last survey? If so, please describe them.

8-Month Checkpoint

Purpose: Assess the overall impact and effectiveness of the mentorship relationship and evaluate whether the goals and objectives have been fully met; gather feedback from both the mentor and mentee on the strengths and weaknesses of the mentorship program, and identify areas where improvements can be made in the future

Sample questions:

1. On a scale of 1-10, how satisfied are you with the mentoring relationship overall?
2. Reflecting on the mentoring relationship throughout the program, what were the most valuable aspects of the relationship for you?
3. Do you feel that the program has adequately supported the mentoring relationship? If not, please explain.
4. What recommendations or feedback do you have for the program to improve the mentoring experience for future participants?
5. Would you be interested in continuing the mentoring relationship beyond the end of the program? If so, in what capacity?

Schedule Overview

January
Program Initiation & Orientation

February
Meet with mentor/mentee

March
Checkpoint Survey #1
In-person Quarterly Meeting

April
Meet with mentor/mentee

May
Meet with mentor/mentee
In-person Quarterly Meeting

June
Checkpoint Survey #2
Meet with mentor/mentee

July
Meet with mentor/mentee

August
End of program event
Checkpoint Survey #3

Potential Discussion Topics

The following list of topics can serve as a reference for potential conversation ideas during monthly mentorship meetings. It can be used when there are no other specific or relevant topics to discuss. Other than filling out the Mentor/Mentee Agreement in the second monthly meeting, none of the topics are obligatory; rather, the list is intended to provide ideas that could be explored by mentors and mentees.

Month 1: Getting Started

- Mentors and mentees will be introduced to their matches
- Mentors and mentees will go over the program expectations and goals by completing the Mentor/Mentee Mentorship Agreement (required)
- MHOA will host an online orientation to review the program guide and answer any questions

Month 2: Expectation Setting

- Mentees will create a list of their professional goals for the program and discuss them with their mentor (optional: use the Goal Setting Framework Worksheet as a guide)
- Mentors will provide feedback on the mentee goals and determine what is feasible for the program timeline

Month 3: Checkpoint #1

- Mentors and mentees will complete a checkpoint survey 1 to evaluate initial progress and discuss the results

Month 4: Skillbuilding

- Mentors and mentees identify areas of strength and areas for improvement in the mentee's professional skill set
- Mentors will provide resources and guidance on skill development

Potential Discussion Topics

Month 5: Networking

- Mentors and mentees identify opportunities for the mentee to expand their professional network
- Mentees participate in networking opportunities and build relationships with other professionals in their field
- Mentors and mentees will complete a second checkpoint survey to evaluate progress and discuss the results

Month 6: Progress Update & Checkpoint #2

- Mentors and mentees review the goals set at the beginning of the program
- Mentors and mentees will complete a checkpoint survey 1 to evaluate progress and discuss the results
- Mentees reflect on their progress and identify any areas for improvement

Month 7: Future Career Planning

- Mentors and mentees discuss any shifts in goals since the beginning of the program
- Mentors help mentees prepare for their next steps in career development by building longer-term plan

Month 8: Program Evaluation & Checkpoint #3

- Mentee and mentor complete a final checkpoint survey to evaluate progress and discuss the results
- Mentors and mentees decide if they want to continue their mentoring relationship beyond the conclusion of the program

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