

# **MENTORING**

**in Early Care and Education**

**Refining**  
—  
**an Emerging**  
—  
**Career Path**  
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**A Report by**

**THE NATIONAL CENTER FOR THE EARLY CHILDHOOD WORK FORCE**

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**MENTORING**  
in Early Care and Education:  
**Refining an Emerging Career Path**

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for the

National Center for the  
Early Childhood Work Force

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## INTRODUCTION

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The importance of a skilled and stable child care work force, and the urgency of tackling the issues of turnover, training, compensation and benefits, are now widely agreed upon by the child care profession and beyond. We are approaching a consensus that the goal of improving child care quality for America's children cannot be realized without addressing the professional development and compensation needs of their caregivers.

Many advocates for quality early childhood services--teachers, providers, policy makers, trainers and corporate leaders--have been experimenting with potential solutions to the staffing crisis. Among the most promising experiments are a variety of early childhood mentoring programs.

On June 1 and 2, 1994, one hundred participants gathered at the NAEYC Professional Development Institute in Chicago for a pre-conference roundtable session on cultivating and refining options for mentoring in early care and education. Over the previous three years, groups involved in developing mentoring programs in California, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia and Wisconsin had been meeting annually during NAEYC conferences to share successes and frustrations, and to learn from one another. Each year, more groups interested in mentoring have joined this informal network.

As our numbers have expanded and our experience deepened, we found that NAEYC conference workshops were too brief for exploring the many practical and policy issues facing mentoring programs. At the 1993 Conference, the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force (NCECW), in collaboration with the Wheelock College Centers for Child Care Policy and Training, agreed to organize and seek support for an expanded meeting. NAEYC then invited us to hold a pre-conference session at its annual Professional Development Institute.

All NAEYC members received an announcement for the Institute which briefly described the Roundtable; a more detailed invitation was then sent to over 200 people who had expressed an interest in mentoring either at previous conferences or by contacting the NCECW office. We hoped to draw people who were actively involved in mentoring, as well as those who were only beginning to explore establishing such a program.

In particular, we wanted mentor teachers and providers themselves to attend in order to integrate their perspectives and recommendations for program and policy development. We recognized, however, that few teachers and providers could afford to attend without assistance, and that the established programs would be unable to entirely cover travel and registration costs. We are grateful for a grant from the American Express Company Philanthropic Program which, combined with local programs' funds, enabled 25 teachers and providers to attend the Roundtable. Seventy five others also attended, including teacher trainers, advocates and mentor program developers and administrators.

Participants came from 31 states, representing a cross section of services including family child care, Military Child Care, public school and community-based child care centers, and Head Start. Among the mentoring programs represented at the Roundtable, several had moved beyond the pilot phase to receive public funding, and were now operating in several sites throughout their states; others were involved in implementing pilot programs, or just beginning to consider expansion; and many more were in the process of program planning and start-up.

The overriding goal of the Roundtable was to create a forum for those involved in mentoring experiments to share their experiences and learn from one another. More specifically, we hoped that Roundtable participants would:

1. begin to formulate principles to guide the development of mentoring programs;
2. identify resources that could support the establishment, improvement and advancement of mentor teacher programs; and
3. establish an ongoing alliance or process to ensure communication between mentor teachers, providers and program developers.

Over the next year, the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force will coordinate the development of a national Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance, and begin to produce a regular series of resource publications on mentoring to supplement the information presented in this Report.

## ROUNDTABLE PLANNERS

The National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force and the Wheelock College Centers for Child Care Policy and Training have been active in searching for staffing solutions, and in translating promising programs into supportive public policy. As interest in mentoring as a model career path has escalated, we have increasingly been called upon to collect and disseminate information about mentoring programs and to help a variety of groups to establish or refine such efforts.

In 1988, NCECW (then known as the Child Care Employee Project, based in Oakland, California) developed the California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program in collaboration with Chabot College. Begun as a pilot project at Chabot, the program has now been expanded to 24 additional college sites throughout the state, with the help of federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funds and private foundations. In 1993, administrative oversight for the statewide program was transferred to Chabot-Las Positas College District, with NCECW assuming responsibility for evaluation, technical assistance and policy work related to mentoring programs.

In 1991, the Wheelock College Centers for Child Care Policy and Training developed curriculum for and jointly implemented a three-year mentoring program through the Child Care Careers Institute in Boston. They have also helped design the recently established Milwaukee Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program. Additionally, Wheelock's long-standing commitment to career development--offering field-based advanced course work and seminars for college credit, and establishing articulation agreements among institutions of higher learning--added a valuable perspective to this work.

Representatives of the following mentor programs were also involved in planning the Roundtable: California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program; Detroit-Wayne County Family Day Care Mentor Program; Massachusetts Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Project; Milwaukee Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program; Minnesota Child Care Apprenticeship Program; North Carolina T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Model/Mentor Teacher Program; and Virginia Model Early Childhood Mentor Project.

Special thanks also to Cathy Davis, Alice Burton, Rosemarie Vardell and Claudia Wayne for their help in organizing the Roundtable and in preparing this Report.

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## PART I

# DEFINING OUR TERMS: MENTORING AND MENTORING PROGRAMS

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## MENTORING

*A mentor, historically and traditionally defined, is an older, more experienced person who is committed to helping a younger, less experienced person become prepared for all aspects of life. (Odell, 1990).*

Often used interchangeably with such terms as guiding, tutoring, coaching or counseling, "mentoring" can be a catch-all term to describe the relationship between a learned, skilled person and a novice. Here, the term assumes a more specific meaning, referring to a early childhood teacher or provider who is concerned not only with how children grow and learn, but in gaining skills to help other adults become more effective practitioners. While the term "mentor" assumes that the teacher or provider has worked in the field for a period of time and has received some education and training, mentoring programs vary considerably in the requirements and process for selection of mentors.

Programs also vary in what they call the person working with the mentor--common terms include "mentee," "protégé," "apprentice" and "peer." Some prefer "protégé" because it refers to being under the care and direction of another for the explicit purpose of furthering one's career. Similarly, "apprentice" focuses on the experiential learning of a trade under the tutelage of one who is already skilled in the work--and public funds dedicated to apprenticeship programs also make this term appealing. "Mentee" is less formal but has yet to become widely accepted as a bona fide word. "Peer" is appealing because it emphasizes mutual learning and equality in the relationship.

In this report we primarily use the terms "mentor" and "protégé," but we also use the other terms occasionally. While there is concern in the field that we develop a common vocabulary in order to facilitate communication, our use of these terms here should not be considered a definitive recommendation or endorsement.

Mentor programs differ on terminology, but they generally agree on the nature of the relationship between mentors and protégés, and on the qualities ascribed to each role. The mentor does not supervise the protégé, but rather coaches and guides. Ideally, the mentor provides a form of back-up or support, to catch the protégé if she falters or to encourage her along if her practice is less than it could be. The mentor is a trusted counselor, offering feedback that moves protégés to a higher level of competence and performance. Mentors are skilled in their craft, creative in problem solving, able to reflect upon their practice, flexible in relating to other adults, receptive to learning new information about the process of teaching, and willing to take risks in order to grow. Protégés are committed to their own growth and development, and willing to learn new skills and reflect upon their practice with children.

## MENTORING PROGRAMS

Mentoring programs are predicated on the notion that experienced teachers and providers are more readily retained in the field if they receive advanced education, salary enhancement, and the opportunity to share their expertise with novice caregivers and other colleagues. Programs reflect an understanding that professional development efforts must be directed at experienced as well as entry-level providers, and must reward people for efforts to further develop their skills.

Mentoring programs can be structured in a variety of ways, depending on where participants work (for example, in centers or family child care homes); whether the mentoring takes place at the mentor's or protégé's place of work, or some combination; and whether an outside mentoring course or seminar takes place before or during the classroom practice. But although they vary in structure, regulation and sources of funds, mentoring programs are committed to three common goals:

- retaining experienced, skilled teachers and providers in early childhood classrooms and homes by providing financial incentives and recognition of their contribution and skills;
- providing professional development opportunities for mentors, particularly with regard to their peer communication, supervisory, leadership and adult education skills as they proceed along a career path;
- creating increased opportunities for novice caregivers to benefit from a student teaching or practicum experience, gain new knowledge, and improve their caregiving practices.

As indicated on the chart on pages 27-28, there are a variety of mentoring models in early care and education programs, and further modifications are being developed in emerging programs as developers assess what will work best in their community. Some programs establish mentor centers or family child care homes in the community for practicum students to visit; some select teachers or providers meeting certain quality standards to work with protégés either in their own classrooms or at their protégés' work places. Mentors can help protégés develop general caregiving skills or specialized skills in a particular area, such as business operations, community referrals or curriculum.

The following are some general principles that can serve to guide program development. Mentoring programs should be:

- responsive to the developmental needs of those they serve, and grounded in research on teacher and adult development;
- supportive in nature, rather than linked to formal evaluation processes;
- forums for improving collegial connections between mentors, protégés, employers and trainers;
- learning systems that examine themselves, improve how they function, and contribute to the collective health of the early care and education community.

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## PART II

# THE VALUE OF MENTORING IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

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## BUILDING A SKILLED AND STABLE WORK FORCE THROUGH MENTORING

*--from a Roundtable address by Marcy Whitebook, Senior Research Policy Advisor,  
NCECW and co-founder of the California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program:*

Recently I spent a morning observing a classroom for four-year-olds at a center in my community. At the end of a long circle time, the children were dispersed to small groups for "work time." My attention was focused on one teacher--I'll call her Mary--who had six children in her group. She immediately captured their attention by holding up a plastic bag filled with wonderful hand puppets with velcro attachments. But for several frustrating minutes--for her and the children--



Mary tried to get everyone to sit quietly so she could begin the activity, which consisted of each child selecting a puppet one by one and choosing a song to sing.

Keep in mind that these were terrific puppets. One had five monkeys attached to the glove; another had five pumpkins. The first child picked the monkey puppet and sang, "Five little monkeys jumping on the bed...." But by the time she got to the third monkey, the other children were grabbing at her puppet and at the other puppets resting by Mary's knee. They were having a very difficult time waiting for their turn, and I felt for them--I was finding it hard not to grab Mary's bag of treasures myself!

I kept waiting for Mary to pass out the other puppets, or at least to let the group share the puppet that was currently in use, but she didn't. She continued in the same manner for another ten minutes, with the children wiggling, distracted and barely engaged in the singing because they were so focused on wanting to touch the puppets. Two children tried to walk away from the activity completely. Mary repeatedly stopped the activity to remind the children of the rules, and by the end she seemed cross and exhausted.

I tell this story not to criticize Mary, but because it underscores the challenges that so many teachers face. When I was a child care teacher, I often found myself in situations that didn't seem to work--and watching Mary, I remembered my mentors Katy and Louise, who constantly helped me by offering gentle suggestions and alternatives.

Mary needed a mentor. In a conversation with her later that day, I learned that she had been teaching for a year and a half and had taken several early childhood education courses--thus meeting our state's standard for certification. She had never taken the lab practicum, however, because she could not afford to take time off her job to "volunteer" in the community college lab school. She was burning out fast; her job was hard. In talking with her and observing her, it seemed clear to me that she had the potential and desire to be a good teacher, but she needed help. She needed to observe other ways of doing the same activity, and she needed to reflect upon why the activity was so frustrating for her and the children.

As more and more teachers and providers enter the field with little or no training, the demand skyrockets for skilled mentors who can help them learn. Earlier and earlier in a teacher's career, she is called upon to offer that assistance to her co-workers. Mary will soon be the senior teacher in her room--if she stays.

But we know that Mary is not likely to stay. Even though she has invested time and money into her specialized early childhood training, she receives little reward for having done so. Almost any other job she could get would pay more, and there is minimal economic reward for her continued training. An entry-level prison guard at nearby San Quentin prison only needs to be eighteen years old, and have a high school diploma and no felony record. The starting salary for this traditionally

male job is \$18.54 an hour, more than three times the average salary for child care workers, and almost double the earnings of the highest-paid child care teachers, most of whom have earned a bachelor's degree and have years of experience in child care. Mary earned only \$6.75 an hour; five years from now she will be exceedingly lucky to earn \$10.00 an hour, and the prison guard will be earning at least \$25.00.

Mentoring programs can help ease the burden for Mary and others like her by providing them with the skills they need, and by establishing a viable career path that will provide them with financial and professional incentives to stay in the classroom.

Mentor training programs create a space for experienced teachers and providers to gain the adult training skills necessary for success in their current *de facto* role as on-the-job trainers for newly recruited providers, many of whom have minimal backgrounds in child development. These programs increase opportunities for a student teaching experience so often unavailable to the growing numbers of teachers who have not received pre-service training, often due to financial need. Early care and education programs have a rich history of "on-the-job" training, not only in lab schools, but also in Head Start programs and in parent cooperatives. Mentoring programs extend this practicum tradition to the many settings in our field that have been overlooked, such as family child care, infant and school-age care, and programs serving families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

Equally important, mentor programs create a new step in the early childhood career progression, allowing a teacher or provider to advance professionally while continuing to educate and teach children directly. By creating a step in the career path that acknowledges the specialized skill of teaching others to care for and educate young children, and by combining this step with financial reward, mentor programs challenge the perception of child care as unskilled work. They also establish an incentive for caregivers to continue in the field, and by providing them with new opportunities for leadership development, mentor programs strengthen the voice of practitioners in efforts to upgrade child care services.

Finally, by calling upon many players in the community--training institutions, centers and homes, corporate and government funders--these programs are truly collaborative efforts. And since they carry the potential to diminish the severe problem of staff turnover in the field, they can greatly enhance the consistency and quality of the services that children and families receive each day.

# MENTORING: AN IMPORTANT STATE IN OUR PROFESSION'S DEVELOPMENT

--from a Roundtable address by Patty Hnatiuk, Director of Child Care Training Programs, Wheelock College, Boston:

Just as teachers go through developmental stages in their work with children and families, our profession has come to a developmental milestone in the 1990s. Mentoring has become an enormously significant step in recognizing and defining the importance that adult development plays in relation to child development. The growth and development of children *and* adults in early care and education settings are vitally linked.

Successful teachers of children also help the adults with whom they work to learn and grow. The role of the teacher/provider is changing. It's changing to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse population of learners--both children and adults. And while mentoring is but one aspect of professional development in our field, it carries the promise of transforming the way we teach and care for young children well into the 21st century.

In her research on mentor teachers in K-12 settings, Joellen Killion (1990) has identified four significant outcomes for mentors:

1. *Growth.* In working with protégés, mentors are compelled to reflect on their own practice, and to examine their actions and beliefs about teaching. This inquiry, essential for professional development, helps mentors to define or refine their own educational philosophies.
2. *Recognition.* Selection as a mentor usually means recognition of accomplishment and status in a profession that offers little role differentiation. The role of mentor confers a certain "expert" designation, an acknowledgment that one has the qualities to make a significant contribution to the profession.
3. *Experience-Enhancing Roles.* The adoption of the mentoring role requires the acquisition of new knowledge and skills to assume new roles, whether as a resource specialist, consultant, facilitator, coach or other helper. Mentors become educational leaders who model effective personal and

professional behaviors for other teachers/providers, students and colleagues.

4. *Collegiality.* By having the opportunity to meet with colleagues--either by welcoming other teachers into their work environment, or by meeting with them in other settings--mentors facilitate collaboration and break the cycle of isolation in early childhood settings.

As mentors, you:

- protect, sponsor, promote and open doors;
- teach, coach, challenge, consult, advise and counsel;
- provide a positive role model;
- problem solve and move on, leading others to more sophisticated stages of concern and cognitive development;
- guide your partners in practice along a path that creates, rather than prohibits, the potential for excellence in teaching.

In essence, you generate and regenerate the process of learning-- dealing critically and creatively with change that leads to transformation, in ourselves and in the field. In our troubled, underpaid, high-turnover profession, this is no small feat!

## TESTIMONIALS BY MENTORS

No group is more eloquent at capturing the significance to the mentoring experience than the mentors who have been involved in the process. We asked mentors attending the Roundtable, "How has becoming a mentor changed you personally and professionally?" A sampling of their responses follows.

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*I've been a family child care provider for twenty years. By becoming a mentor, and responding to people's questions, I am realizing how much I know. The more we can help other providers to do a good job, the more we support ourselves and the community.*

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*After seven years of teaching, I was at a crossroads. I didn't really want to leave my classroom, but I kept thinking about what I should do next. I needed a new challenge. Becoming a mentor teacher re-energized me--I was able to learn more about myself as a (CON'T)*

teacher, and I have learned a lot from my student. I feel so much better about myself and what I can contribute.

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I used to work in engineering, and then I became a family child care provider. When I became a mentor I had a chance to help others learn about business, and they helped me learn more about running a family day care. Knowing other providers and getting a chance to talk about what we do makes us feel much less isolated, and that's a big step towards improving the quality of care.

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I was so frustrated as a preschool teacher. I felt that nobody cared about my work, and I was planning to go back to school so I could go into a "real" profession. Then I got involved in the mentor teacher program. It was so great to be with others who saw themselves as professionals; it helped me to see myself that way and to realize that child care is "for real." I want to be a better advocate so that everyone will get a chance to experience the Mentor Program. We need more of us! We need teachers and providers who can advocate for ourselves.

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I am a toddler teacher but I never intended to teach lower than third grade. I decided to stick with my

job until I could get one in the public school. After three years I finally began to feel comfortable about what I was doing. If I'd had a mentor, if someone had helped me learn what I needed to know to care for kids at this age, it would have been so much easier and more fun. I get a lot of satisfaction as a mentor, helping others get started. My own teaching is improving as I think about what I am doing and why. Now I'm not waiting for a "real" teaching job. I am in child care, and I know I am already working in the field of education.

\*\*\*

I also went into child care while waiting for a public school job to open up. I've known for a while that my self-esteem increases when I can help other teachers, so I was very excited by the opportunity to become a mentor. It's so stimulating and challenging. Sometimes your mentee might not really like getting critical feedback, but it is a special gift to learn how to be able to talk honestly with people about the work they are doing.

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I had been teaching for thirteen years and felt it was time to leave the classroom. Part of it was the money, but I also felt I was losing my enthusiasm for the work. Then the mentor program came around and I decided to stay and give it a try. I realized that I was ready to teach adults as well as children, and the mentor (CON'T)

program has opened up this whole new area for me. It has made me recommit to being a classroom teacher--not just for the children, but for the teachers. All of us mentors are working now to establish the role of mentor in our state certification system, to formalize the role so that long-term teachers can have a goal to move toward.

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The mentor program came at a critical point. I was ready to leave the field. I felt like the program said to me, "You are a teacher, a professional and an advocate," and it helped me recognize that I have those skills. I have met so many people, and so many opportunities have opened up.

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Becoming a mentor is another step in learning from each other. There is so little respect for this field, that we don't recognize what we know or have to offer. The mentor program has changed that--there is a new sense of professionalism and respect. I hope it will be realized by more and more people. The mentor program--and this conference--are different because teachers and providers are talking instead of being talked about.

\*\*\*

I was at the point of burn-out when I heard about the Mentor Teacher Program. I have 13 kids I am supposed to care for by myself, so my first thought was that having a mentee would give me some help. The program created a bond among all the mentors, and we are a support group for each other. I didn't expect that. I also am developing a close relationship with my mentee; we're doing a workshop at a conference together this month.

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I was looking forward to having a mentee but I didn't realize what I would learn from her. My mentee was one of those people who sees the shining light in the most challenging child. It really helped me to see some of the children differently through her eyes. I have been given at least as much as I have received.

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I feel valued when I can help someone, and that's why I wanted to be a mentor. Still, I feared I wouldn't be able to go through with the program; I would be too afraid to speak publicly. But the program has encouraged me to find the strength inside of me. It gave me a voice. We need change, and it can't happen unless we are heard.

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## **PART III**

# **SEVEN MENTORING PROGRAMS: REPORTS FROM THE FIELD**

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Representatives of the seven mentoring programs collaborating on the Roundtable were asked to highlight their successes, as well as the barriers they have faced, in initiating, implementing and/or expanding their programs.

Several common themes emerged from these presentations. Among the successes were the ability to provide relevant training to committed teachers and providers, and the chance to recognize mentors' skills and commitment through monetary and public acknowledgment. Valuable by-products of the programs included empowering new teacher/provider advocates for the profession; the creation of formal and informal support networks to decrease the isolation of teachers and programs; and "buy-in" from many community players, including trainers, directors and policy makers, to build a broader base of support.

Obstacles facing mentoring programs centered around the availability of and access to resources. Concerns about ongoing funding, the sufficiency of funds to compensate mentors for their additional work, and how inclusive or exclusive the programs are and should be to the pool of teachers and providers in the community were uppermost.

Summaries of their comments follow.

## PEG HARRELSON, Ph.D. Virginia Model Early Childhood Mentor Project

A year and a half ago, we didn't really know what a mentoring program was, and we were unfamiliar with any other programs. Our model selects child care centers to become mentor centers, whose staff then provide technical assistance and training to other centers.

### Successes:

- Our program began as part of a major initiative developed by a state agency supported by federal Child Care and Development Block Grant funds, and therefore it is part of an ongoing infrastructure and vision. When our Block Grant quality enhancement plan was voted on for next year, there was no discussion about the mentor program per se. It was automatically refunded and even expanded to an additional site.
- Because it is not a free-standing program, our program is not only less vulnerable, but also benefits from the support that other, connected programs receive. For example, the mentor program is interwoven with a training initiative for providers who work with adults and children with drug and alcohol syndrome.
- The mentor program has spawned more advanced training for teachers and established a demand for additional course work. When a local college recently offered a course for 20 students, for example, 80 applied.

### Challenges:

- The Mentor Program is only as secure as our Block Grant funding, on which it is totally dependent. It is not integrated into any ongoing state funding.
- The Mentor Program does not have sufficient funds to compensate mentors on a permanent basis. Those who take the advanced mentoring course only get additional money if they are attached to a model mentor center; 16 new mentors this year will not receive compensation for their efforts.
- The expanding network of mentors is not supported with a structure to connect them to each other in a meaningful way or to provide ongoing resources.

## NANCY JOHNSON, Minnesota Apprenticeship Program

This program, which began in the fall of 1993, is still in its initiation stage. It is designed to follow the National Guidelines for Apprenticeship Programs established by the federal government.

### Successes:

- We started the program by asking teachers and providers what they needed, and structured the program accordingly. For example, they clearly stated that they didn't want an ongoing connection to the program, and they wanted to earn college credits as part of their participation. Those who participate make a two-year commitment to the program and receive four credits for the mentoring course.
- We involved established community agencies from the onset--the resource and referral agencies, and the technical, two-year and four-year colleges--to ensure that the program would be broadly supported.
- From the beginning, we clearly established the goal of increasing child care compensation and quality, and we promoted the program to the legislature on that basis--rather than trying to raise more funds later down the line in order to improve salaries.
- When the legislature allocated funds for the pilot project, we invited a wide range of people to a launching ceremony, even though only ten mentors and apprentices would participate in the first round of the program. Our goal was to establish buy-in from many teachers and training staff who would benefit from the program as it expanded.

### Challenges:

- A program which includes money for training and compensation for mentors and apprentices is more expensive than traditional training programs.
- It is a challenge to get centers to agree to take on ongoing wage increases for mentors.
- We struggled with our definition of professionalism to ensure that it does not exclude women of color and people from working class backgrounds who do not have as many educational opportunities, and who typically hold assistant rather than lead teacher positions. We struggled to define criteria for mentoring that would be more inclusive, relying on competencies rather than college degrees alone as a qualification.

**LAURA KURCHARSKI,  
Mentor Teacher  
Milwaukee Early Childhood Mentor  
Teacher Program**

Initiated and developed in 1993, the state-funded pilot was implemented between January and June, 1994. Teachers and providers already employed in the field become mentors or protégés; directors, who agree to raise wages when teachers complete the training, also participate in meetings to build support for the program. Those involved in the pilot phase are currently planning next steps for building the program.

**Successes:**

- A sense of community was created between centers, as well as among individuals, because mentors and protégés spent time visiting each other's programs. This decreased the sense of isolation so endemic to the field.
- Center visits enabled mentors to see their suggestions put into practice first-hand, thus increasing their sense of effectiveness and enabling them to modify suggestions as needed.
- Field instructors provided critical support to mentors, enabling them to maintain focus and adapt their interactions with protégés as needed.
- Mentors developed a tight-knit support group. As one said, "I now have eleven colleagues beyond my center that I can go to for help with work issues."

**Challenges:**

- Although the criterion for protégés was at least one year's experience in the field as a lead teacher, it did not guarantee their level of competency. Educational backgrounds varied from meeting the state requirement of 80 hours of course work to many more units; some were relatively new to the field, while others had many years of experience. Mentors found that much of their work focused on helping protégés undo bad habits and learn basic developmental practices. We need to devote more energy to raising the competency levels of protégés.
- Mentors and protégés did not necessarily share common language or values about working with young children, let alone goals for the mentoring experience. This required backing up and establishing shared objectives and vocabulary for communicating.

**CAL WILLIAMS,  
Detroit-Wayne County Family Day Care  
Mentor Program**

Funded by the Kellogg Foundation through Wheelock College as a two-year project, this program focuses on establishing mentoring relationships between family child care providers.

**Successes:**

- We utilized existing skills within the family child care community by identifying particular strengths of mentors, such as curriculum or business practices, and then circulating a list of mentors and their skills to the mentors and mentees. This enabled many people to act as mentors, and provided mentors with an opportunity to learn from each other as well.
- We held a breakfast for mentors, mentees and their families to celebrate the providers' hard work and dedication, to acknowledge their family members who are so essential to the functioning of family child care, and to mark the achievements and learning that came from the mentor program.
- We involved mentors in planning and evaluation, which established their commitment to our program, as evidenced by their proposals to contribute partial funding in order to leverage additional funds to maintain it.

**Challenges:**

- Our funding is not ongoing. We received a two-year grant from the Kellogg Foundation through a Wheelock College Initiative, and must now seek additional money to continue it.
- It's challenging to do outreach to providers who are not already involved in a network. We found that the program tended to reach people who were already connected to each other, rather than those who were more isolated in their homes.
- Many family child care providers still do not think of themselves as professionals, which makes it difficult to recruit them for training and provider association activities. This program, however, is one that has made professionalism more attractive.

## PAT MUCCI, Mentor Teacher Massachusetts Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Project

This pilot program started in the greater Boston area in 1991. It was designed originally as a two-and-a-half-year program with intense academic and practicum components. Planners are now working to create a shortened version of the program, and to establish mentoring as a step in the state certification system

### Successes:

- The program was well-planned financially. Mentors received a \$500 stipend at the end of each semester, for a total of \$2,000 for their participation, and money was available to centers to pay substitutes while the mentors were in the field with their mentees.
- Through the process of completing formal course work together, mentors created their own informal support group, which was important to their own growth process.
- While mentors were working with protégés, they were assigned a field supervisor--a senior colleague that mentored them as they were learning to mentor. This support was also critical to the success of the program.

### Challenges:

- The funding for the program is not ongoing. Fundraising is required to continue it.
- The program required mentors to leave their classroom once a week to work with protégés at their sites, as well as for course work. Although they had substitutes, mentors found it disruptive to leave the children so frequently. After awhile, however, mentors learned to "let go," and were delighted to see how their colleagues grew by taking on more responsibility when they were away.
- Many participants felt the program was too long, and would have preferred a condensed version of the academic component with a year-round field component.

## JACKIE FITZGERALD, California Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program, Alameda County

Begun as a pilot program in 1988-89 by NCECW (then the Child Care Employee Project) and Chabot College, the program has expanded rapidly to 24 college sites as a result of receiving private foundation and Child Care and Development Block Grant funds.

### Successes:

- The program was designed to meld with the existing community college system and garnered widespread support. The pilot phase helped to iron out difficulties before the program was implemented in other communities.
- The program establishes well-articulated guidelines and procedures for all college sites, but permits sufficient local autonomy to allow for community variations. (A program guideline and procedure manual is available from Chabot College; see chart beginning on page 27).
- Mentors receive a stipend of \$500 per year to attend an ongoing seminar and to support a professional advancement activity. In addition, mentors receive a stipend each time they work with a mentee. Annual stipends for mentors range from \$500 to \$4200. Average stipends are \$1054.
  - Mentors have become successful advocates for better compensation and for the program itself, having saved it from funding cuts because of their effective testimony at state hearings. Mentors have established a teacher/provider voice at the program has meant to them financially and

professionally. One mentor, who makes \$6.00 an hour, swayed hearing officers in a way that no statistical report could, when he told how the mentor stipend enabled him to buy his daughter a high school graduation dress.

### Challenges:

- Disseminating information about the program to colleges and to potential mentors and mentees is difficult. A promotional video which describes the program is being developed, along with an accompanying manual for each campus.
- The complexity and cost of the program make it vulnerable. The compensation component is expensive, particularly if the program is viewed as "just another" training initiative. The program also has large start-up costs: each site must develop a class, and establish a selection committee representing diverse elements in the community to review mentor applications and make final selections. If viewed out of context, the program may not seem cost-effective.

# MARGARET MOBLEY, North Carolina Model/Mentor Teacher Program

The Model/Mentor Program is one component of T.E.A.C.H., an educational scholarship program which provides training and increased pay, in exchange for a commitment to stay on the job, for teachers from entry-level through advanced positions. The Model/Mentor Program is targeted toward teachers with at least an A.A. degree, who upon completion of the mentor program receive a three-percent pay increase paid for by T.E.A.C.H. The employer assumes the pay raise in the second year. The first year of the program was supported through the Child Care and Development Block Grant; the second year support came from corporate sources. Developers are now working on securing ongoing state funding.

## Successes:

- Although the pay raise is not substantial, it signals recognition of the importance of better compensation to retain qualified teachers, and the need to reward increased education with better pay.
- Excitement about the program is growing. Only four of the fifty-eight colleges now have mentor cohorts, but others are now vying to become mentor sites.
- The program is targeted to A.A.-level teachers, who often don't have access to advanced training or receive recognition for their level of professional development.
- the educational background; other components of the T.E.A.C.H. program, however, provide support for them to complete their degrees.
- The local community college was chosen to assign mentees to mentors. This was to ensure that credit would be given and to build broad community support for the program. In some cases, there have been too few students available to become mentees for all the trained mentors. This has been frustrating, given the large numbers of teachers and assistants in the community who would benefit from a mentoring relationship. Some people have wanted to assign mentees from the community, whether or not they are students.

## Challenges:

- The A.A. degree requirement limits the pool of teachers who can participate in the program, and recruitment is challenging. It can be difficult to find fifteen teachers at a time who qualify and are able to take the course. Some excellent teachers cannot access the program because they don't have
- Although mentors participating in the program are required to commit to one year in their center in exchange for their training and salary increase, the Model/Mentor Program has exposed many mentors to higher-quality programs, which in turn has fueled their desire to change jobs. While the program is supporting field-wide retention, it does not necessarily reduce specific center turnover.

MENTOR PROGRAMS HIGHLIGHTED AT ROUNDTABLE - CHICAGO 1994

NAME OF PROGRAM ADDRESS, PHONE CONTACT PERSON	PROGRAM SPONSOR/FUNDER	YEAR PROGRAM BEGAN & GEOGRAPHIC REGION	TARGET POPULATION: MENTORS PROTÉGÉS	PREREQUISITES OR QUALIFICATIONS: MENTORS	SPECIAL TRAINING AND CREDITS	LENGTH OF MENTOR PARTICIPATION	COMPENSATION INCREASES	NUMBER TRAINED
California Early Childhood Mentor Program Chabot College 25555 Hesperian Blvd. Hayward, CA 94545 510-786-6921 • Peyton Nattinger	• Chabot College • CA Dept. of Ed. Child Dev. Division • CCDBG Funds • Community College Chancellors Office	1988 State of CA	Mentors: Center teachers & family child providers Protégés: Community college and high school regional occupational program students	Completed college level ECE training program that included student teaching, 2 years experience	Two unit course in classroom supervision Ongoing Mentor seminar	Recerti- fication required after three years	Yes. Mentors receive avg. \$1054 per year; range \$500-\$4200	151 Mentors 160 Protégés 84 other teachers
Massachusetts Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Project c/o Wheelock College 200 The Riverway Boston, MA 02215-4176 617-734-5200 ext 224 • Patty Hnatuk	• Child Care Careers Institute, Boston • MassBay United Way	1991 Greater Boston	Mentors: Center lead teachers Protégés: Center teachers or assistants	Lead Teachers 4 courses in Early Childhood Education (minimum)	Four college courses (3 credits) (includ- ing fieldwork); one (2 credit) course (graduate or under- graduate)	Two and one- half years	Yes. As per program plus \$2,000 stipend (Mentors)	12 Mentors 20 Protégés
Detroit/Wayne Co. Family Day Care Mentor Program 2751 East Jefferson #420 Detroit, MI 48214 313-259-4411 • Cal Williams	• Child Care Coordinating Council of Detroit/Wayne Co. • Wheelock College • Kellogg Foundation	1992 Detroit and Wayne County	Mentors: Family day care providers	18 months as a family day care provider; 15 hours child care training; CPR/First Aid	3 hour orientation 37 hours basic and advanced training	One year (min.)	No	50 Mentors
The Minnesota Child Care Apprenticeship Program (MCCAP) 1628 Elliot Ave. So. Minneapolis, MN 55404 612-341-1177 • Nancy Johnson • Diane Friebe	• Greater Minneapolis Day Care Assoc. (GMDCA) • CCDBG Funds • State General Funds	1993 Minnea- polis/St. Paul Other sites in MN	Mentors and apprentices: Center teachers and assistant teachers	DHS teacher qualified (CDA or 24 college credits); 5 years experience infield; 3 years as child care teacher	4 credits Mentor Internship	4,000 hours over two years	Yes \$1040 stipend	13 Appren- tices



NAME OF PROGRAM ADDRESS, PHONE CONTACT PERSON	PROGRAM SPONSOR/FUNDER	YEAR PROGRAM BEGAN & GEOGRAPHIC REGION	TARGET POPULATION: MENTORS PROTÉGÉS	PREREQUISITES OR QUALIFICATIONS: MENTORS	SPECIAL TRAINING AND CREDITS	LENGTH OF MENTOR PARTICIPATION	COMPENSATION INCREASES	NUMBER TRAINED
T.E.A.C.H. Teacher Education and Compensation Helps P.O. Box 901 Chapel Hill, NC 27514 919-967-3272 • Margaret Mobley	• Day Care Services Association --- • Private foundations, corporation, CCDBG and State funds	1992  Particular areas of NC	Mentors: Center teachers  Protégés: Community College students and other employed teachers	Mentors: 2 or 4 year degree in ECE; 2 years experience teaching; 1 year at current site	Course: Early Childhood Leadership through Mentoring (3 credits), graduate or undergrad. (16 weeks)	One year	Yes. For mentors 3% year one, plus \$100 bonus  (also paid release time for some)	34 Mentors
Model Early Childhood Mentor Project 1100 Bank Street Washington Bldg. Suite 1116 Richmond, VA 23219 804-371-8603 • Peggy C. Harrelson	• VA Council on Child Day Care and Early Childhood Programs --- • CCDBG Funds	1992  Statewide	Mentors: Center teachers	One (3 credit) course in early childhood/ child development; one year experience working in the field	One (3 credit) course in one semester	One year	Yes. Annual stipend \$700	46 Mentors
Milwaukee Early Childhood Mentor Teacher Program 700 W. State Street Milwaukee, WI 53233 414-229-5384 • Jean Madaus	• Milwaukee Area Technical College (MATC) and community child care programs • 4-C of Milwaukee --- • CCDBG Funds	1994  Greater Milwaukee	Mentors: Center teachers  Protégés: Assistant teachers and family child care providers	Mentors: 2 years experience (center or home)  Lead teacher: 12 credits in ECE or CDA plus 6 credits  Protégés: less experience	One (36 hr.) seminar (2 credits): Mentors  One (30 hr.) course (2 credits): Mentors and protégés  Grad. or undergrad credits available	Five months (seminar and course)	Yes. Mentors and protégés as per program  \$500 stipend to Mentors	12 Mentors  12 Protégés

## PART IV

# KEY CONSIDERATIONS IN PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

Participants in the Mentoring Roundtable spent a session in work groups focused on one of three phases of program development: initiation, implementation and expansion. The following is a summary of the discussion and suggestions that emerged from these groups.

## THE INITIATION PHASE

### Players

It is critical to the ultimate success of a mentoring program to have diverse and representative groups of partners committed to it from its inception. When different constituencies are involved in the design of the program, they are more likely to feel that it will meet their needs, and to feel ownership of and responsibility toward it. The variety of potential players will depend on the particulars of a community, but could include:

- lead teachers and assistant teachers from center-based programs;
- family child care providers;
- teacher/providers associations, unions and professional organizations;
- parents;
- directors of center-based programs, including nonprofit, for-profit, subsidized, church-affiliated, school district and Head Start programs;
- instructors and administrators from technical schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities that provide courses for early childhood education and child development students;
- other child care trainers;
- teacher-training professional organizations;
- vocational education representatives;
- early childhood education students;
- child care resource and referral agencies;
- school district representatives;
- child care advocates;
- education specialists;
- foundations;
- government representatives, including child care commissions, lead agencies for local Child Care and Development Block Grant planning, commissions on teacher certification, bureaus of apprenticeship and training, and departments of social services;
- private-sector corporations supportive of child care.

In the very beginning of initiating a mentoring program, there may be only a few motivated members of the planning group. Early on, however, planners should seek to diversify so that the community won't feel later that it is being asked to rubber-stamp a finished design. Some players who are invited will not actively participate in the core planning, of course, but they will be more likely to feel included and to support the program later on.

If a planning group lacks the racial, ethnic, economic and cultural diversity to reflect the early care and education community in its area, a task force of the planning group should be charged with diversifying the leadership, reaching out to groups that are traditionally excluded from program planning. Barriers that block access to meetings--such as lack of child care, transportation, and inconvenient meeting times or locations--should be examined in order to include more people.

## The Planning Process

Besides the time-consuming process of fundraising, crafting a program requires substantial deliberation. Many groups have spent six months to a year designing their programs, beginning with articulating a vision and a set of goals. These are essential for recruiting members to the planning group, but may need to be revised as new members give their input. Because mentoring might mean many different things to different people, early planning may also require some careful definition of terms in order to avoid misunderstandings. Researching and reviewing various mentor program models, in order to assess which elements might work best or be most easily adapted locally, can help the group to focus on its own priorities more efficiently.

Some groups have been able to obtain planning grants, or to secure release time from a member agency to cover the cost of one person coordinating the planning process. Once there is a basic program design, it may also be necessary to develop targeted promotional materials which state clearly how mentoring would benefit various constituencies, as the next step in building support for implementing the program.

## Funding

In seeking funding for a mentoring program, it is important to measure all anticipated costs up front. If planners believe that compensation for mentors and reimbursement of all training-related costs should be included in the program budget, all such costs should be included in the group's funding proposals; clearly, it would be much harder to go back to a funder at a later date to ask for an expanded budget.

Several mentor programs have received funding through the Child Care and Development Block Grant Quality Enhancement Funds, which permit expenditures to improve the training and compensation of child care teachers and providers. Others have received other state training dollars and/or private foundation grants. In some cases, private foundation money has been used as a seed grant to plan a pilot project, which in turn helped to leverage increased public funding. By working with established institutions such as colleges in planning the program, program developers have also received in-kind donations of time or other resources, including information about access to other funding streams. To the extent that the mentor program design is linked to other efforts in the state and community to improve child care, such as a state professional development planning process, and to the extent that it cultivates the interest of key state officials in charge of allocating training dollars, the possibilities for funding will greatly expand.

## THE IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

Among the many decisions surrounding program design and start-up, Roundtable participants focused their discussion on selecting mentors, supporting mentors and protégés, and troubleshooting.

### Who Should Be A Mentor? Who Should Be A Protégé?

Participants in the work groups generally agreed on criteria for mentors, but raised many challenging questions about their application. Mentors should have:

- a sound background in early childhood education, including an understanding of age-appropriate activities for children;
- an articulated, knowledge-based philosophy about what constitutes high-quality early care and education services;
- a certain minimum classroom or family child care home experience (current programs require anywhere from one to five years);
- good interpersonal skills for working with adults;
- time and energy to make a commitment to the mentoring program.

Protégés, for their part, should be already employed in the field, committed and motivated to assume greater responsibility, and supported by their director to participate in the program.

Each of these criteria can be broadly interpreted--a reflection, in part, of the wide variety in state regulations for teacher/provider professional preparation, which in turn influences the background of the pool of teachers and providers who are available to become mentors or protégés. In some states, mentor candidates must have an A.A. or B.A. degree, while in others a year of training or 15 hours may suffice. Participants warned of the danger of creating qualifications that would exclude many experienced and committed workers in the field, and/or using selection measures and methods which work against people with less formal education and training, or which are insensitive to different cultural styles. (See also the discussions of access and diversity in Part V.)

## Supports to Ensure Mentor and Protégé Participation

Mentoring programs require an additional investment of time and energy beyond the demands of already challenging child care jobs. Without adequate support, mentors and protégés will be unable to complete their training or follow through in practice with what they have learned. Participants identified a number of interventions to aid mentors and protégés:

### *Orientation*

Mentors and protégés should receive thorough information about the program and its expectations before making a commitment to participate. Some programs meet with each participant to develop an individual professional development plan, outlining responsibilities and measuring progress toward personal goals.

### *Recognition*

Mentors and protégés need to be acknowledged for the commitment and dedication it takes to participate in the program. Recognition can come through adequate financial compensation, as well as from personal and public appreciation of their efforts by directors, co-workers and parents.

### *Financial Reward*

While not all mentoring programs currently provide additional compensation in the form of a pay increase or stipend for mentors or protégés, increased training and work should ideally be rewarded with increased pay. In addition, it is important that the mentoring program not create an additional financial burden for participants; many programs cover all or a portion of the training costs, as well as additional expenses for child care and transportation. Given that many child care workers do not own cars, it is important that attention be given to transportation needs, including access, safety and cost.

### *Realistic Requirements*

All the forethought in the world won't make the program workable if it expects too much of participants. There is a wide range of training models, some spanning a few months and some lasting more than a year, with varying degrees of required hours of participation and study. Careful thought should be given to developing a realistic time table; when programs require too much, mentors and protégés can feel rushed and overwhelmed rather than empowered by their new roles and opportunities.

### *Release Time and Substitutes*

Mentoring programs are structured in a variety of ways, but almost all involve some period of time when mentors and/or protégés leave their regular classroom--perhaps a half or full day once every week or month. In center based programs, a mentor might visit the protégé's center or vice versa. Substitutes are required, therefore, in most mentoring programs. Planning will involve not only adequate funds to cover substitute pay, but also an adequate pool of consistent substitutes who can minimize the burden of the teacher/provider's absence on children and co-workers. It may be possible to hire one or two people who could cover the classrooms or homes of a number of providers and teachers on a regular basis. Without adequate coverage of their programs, mentors and protégés will not have the peace of mind to concentrate on their learning process.

### *Director and Co-Worker Involvement*

The mentoring experience can be undermined if directors of centers and other co-workers don't support the process, or have insufficient information or connection to the program. Crucial to staff support is a thorough understanding of the goals and expectations of the program and its value to everyone in the center. Without this understanding, the demand of the program can lead to tensions stemming from accommodations directors and co-workers must make to permit the mentor to meet program requirements. Supportive directors will ensure that there are substitutes and that mentors have the opportunity to share what they are learning with their co-workers. They will encourage but not force teachers to become involved. To the extent that the mentor program can provide a forum for directors--a monthly meeting for example where directors can share experiences--their bond with the program is deepened. In family child care homes, parental understanding and support of the program is critical as well.

### *Field Instructors*

These roles may be structured in a variety of ways, but it is important that mentors have a mentor themselves--someone to turn to as they assume the new role of working with adult learners. Mentors, of course, will do some of this for each other, but it is important that an experienced teacher educator be available to guide and encourage them.

### *Ongoing Support Structure*

An important element in mentoring is sharing with others who are engaged in the same process. Some mentor programs structure an ongoing support group or seminar for mentors once they have completed their course work. Less common are support groups for protégés, but these would also be beneficial. An ideal arrangement might be for mentors and protégés to meet periodically as a full group, as well as within their own subgroup. Often because of lack of resources, support groups come to an end even though mentors are continuing their role. An ongoing Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance--organized both locally and nationally--is a critical need. The National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force is currently developing such an Alliance (see Part VI).

### *Building the Mentor Voice*

Successful program planning groups involve and listen to mentors and protégés when developing and refining their models. By developing clear communication structures and access to program administrators, planning groups insure that mentors and protégés will work to improve programs when problems arise rather than drop out. When participants feel ownership in the program, they will work to protect and expand it.

## Common Challenges To Successful Program Operation

### *Mentoring Versus Supervision*

Mentors guide and support their protégés through the learning process. Supervision, by contrast, entails directing and evaluating a person's performance. Although a supervisor, ideally, can tutor and coach someone in a supportive fashion, a mentor should not act as a supervisor of her protégé, and mentor programs should clearly distinguish between these two roles. The learning relationship can be compromised when job security is at issue.

### *Community Relations*

Mentoring programs interface with various community institutions--centers, provider associations, colleges and universities. How well mentors and protégés navigate among these institutions will greatly influence the success of the program. Mentoring programs can mediate between colleges and participants by ensuring that requirements are clear (e.g., completion of program expectations will meet those of the college), or can work out articulation agreements so that upper-division credit will be given to those who need it for degrees.

### *Job Turnover*

Some mentors and protégés participating in mentoring programs have become dissatisfied with their places of employment as a result of being exposed to other, higher-quality programs, and have decided to change jobs. Mentoring programs might request a commitment from participants to stay at their present jobs, but they cannot discourage people from seeking better employment. Programs, however, might consider working with centers of poorer quality to help them improve their services.

### *Documenting Program Achievements*

Any experimental program has to prove itself not only to participants, but also to funders and policy makers who have the discretion to expand, maintain or discontinue the program. Often, even before a program gets started, funders will ask for facts that document the effectiveness of similar efforts. There is therefore a critical need for mentoring programs to share information they have gathered from documenting and evaluating their activities. Information should include facts about the expenditures and

the number of people affected by the program--teachers, students and children--as well as information about program outcomes.

## THE EXPANSION PHASE

After a successful pilot phase, most mentoring programs are eager to extend the benefits of their model to a larger pool of teachers and providers. In California and North Carolina, local pilot programs are now expanding throughout the state. As a program grows or develops additional sites, bigger budgets and more players often require modifications in the original program design and/or more attention to administrative details.

It is very important to obtain feedback from all the players in a mentoring program as you seek to expand it. Focus groups composed of key interests might serve as a first step in the process, so that all will feel that their needs are being heard. Mentors and protégés should also be asked for feedback and engaged in the redesign of the program, since they possess crucial first-hand knowledge of what has and hasn't worked.

### Securing Ongoing Funding

Mentoring programs are vulnerable because most do not have stable, ongoing funding. There is considerable trepidation about setting up a program that can't be continued. Roundtable participants discussed the need to advocate for dedicated funds (perhaps through the Child Care and Development Block Grant) and public policies (integrating mentor positions into state career development plans, for example) in order to sustain mentoring programs.

### Overcoming Geographic Obstacles

Particularly in rural communities, connecting mentors and protégés and providing mentor support groups is extremely challenging. Traveling long distances is time-consuming and expensive, yet there is much to be gained from coming together frequently and regularly. Adapting programs to accommodate rural providers through teleconferencing might be a successful training strategy, one that has been used increasingly in Head Start training. Other possibilities include weekend retreats and on-line communication.

## Establishing Common Language About Mentoring In Early Care And Education

The many models for mentoring programs, with their varied requirements and structures, reflect the lack of established standards and regulations in the early childhood field. While this diversity has had great value, and local groups generally desire to retain flexibility in defining their own programs, there is a growing need for program guidelines that will help to establish mentoring as an identifiable career progression and to bring together mentoring advocates around common goals.

## Learning From Each Other And Building A Voice For Mentor Programs

People interested in starting mentoring programs, as well as those who are already involved, need opportunities to brainstorm and to share information with each other. Testimony by mentors, combined with information about program effectiveness, should be widely disseminated locally and throughout the country. There is also a need for greater local and national media coverage, as promotional flyers and videos about mentoring programs, and greater visibility of mentoring options at professional conferences.

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## PART V

# INSTITUTIONALIZING MENTOR PROGRAMS: CRITICAL ISSUES

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## FUNDING AND COMPENSATION

Given the widespread lack of resources for early care and education in the United States, securing funds is clearly the most pressing concern in initiating and sustaining mentor programs. The amount of funding required for mentor programs is determined in large measure by the extent to which expenses for training, release time and compensation are assumed by the program rather than passed on to the mentor, mentee or employer.

By linking training with higher compensation, mentor programs have garnered support from foundations and public agencies that are concerned about high turnover in the child care work force. But mentor programs are also vulnerable because of their cost: they are praised for addressing the needs of experienced teachers and providers to earn better compensation, and at the same time they are challenged for being more expensive than other forms of training.

Perhaps the only response to this "catch 22" is to tackle it head on, by exposing how limited most other training opportunities have been in *retaining* experienced caregivers.

By reducing the need to constantly hire and train new staff, mentor programs have a long-term cost effectiveness that the field must document and publicize. While there are no easy answers to the question of how to finance more and better mentoring programs, there are a variety of possible sources of support. These include:

- local funds such as Kiwanis and United Way.
- federal funds available at the local level for job training and apprenticeships, such as JTPA and Americorps.
- a variety of local and national foundations which have been instrumental in funding pilot mentoring programs.
- corporate efforts targeted toward improving the quality of child care.
- professional association funds for training and quality enhancement. Some NAEYC affiliate groups, for example, have partially supported mentor programs.
- federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds, either through quality enhancement grants or through higher reimbursement rates offered to high-quality programs such as mentoring centers. A possible proposal for the CCDBG reauthorization process in 1995 would be for funds to support mentoring demonstration projects.
- other quality enhancement initiatives at the state level.
- other federal quality enhancement initiatives. The Department of Defense is exploring mentoring options for their Child Development Services, and the 1994 Head Start Reauthorization establishes mentor teachers as a staff category for all grantees.

There is also general agreement in the field about which costs to mentors and protégés should be covered by the mentoring program, in order to make it accessible and helpful to participants rather than an additional financial burden. Among the costs typically covered by mentoring programs are:

- books and other classroom materials.
- tuition. (Some programs believe, however, that if mentors and protégés are required to pay a small portion of these costs, they are more likely to make a long-term commitment to the process and to their jobs.)
- travel and child care expenses.

- release time and substitute teachers, to allow for classroom visits and meetings between mentors, protégés, and instructors.

In terms of higher compensation for mentors, some programs have provided flat-rate pay increases--for example, three percent above their current wage, or \$500 for the year--while others have based payment on a formula reflecting the hours spent working with mentees. In the latter approach, mentors in the same program would earn varying amounts. The mentor program can pay the mentor directly in the form of a stipend or an honorarium, or the mentor's employer can provide either an ongoing pay raise or a bonus. Direct payments by the mentor program are the most feasible approach for family child care providers. Ultimately, pay increases set to the salary schedules at a mentor's work place are the most dependable, long-term route to higher compensation.

Though they may like to, however, many centers cannot make a long-term commitment to increasing staff salaries. In North Carolina, mentoring program developers were pleased that centers gave average raises to mentors of about 13 percent a year, exceeding the required three percent for participating in the program. But since even a 15-percent increase on a \$5.00 per hour salary is less than a \$1.00 raise, it was not surprising that some mentors still left their jobs despite the additional earnings. In most cases the money that mentors receive, while vitally important, cannot fully make up for the low pay of child care teaching jobs.

## STANDARDS

In the absence of national standards that define training and competency criteria for early care and education staff, there is tremendous variation across states in the required professional preparation and/or ongoing training that qualifies a person as a teacher, assistant or provider. In practice, the notion of an "early childhood education background" carries quite different meanings in different communities. As a result, it is not surprising to find great variation among mentoring programs with regard to expectations, prerequisites, qualifications and program structures. Some prefer more informal approaches to mentoring, while others favor more explicit program criteria.

Roundtable participants experienced first hand the lack of a common vocabulary. To some, the term "mentor" carries very specific meanings about background and professional preparation. For others, mentoring refers to a process, a philosophy of adult education and a model for relating rather than to a formal program. Likewise, some participants used terms such as mentee, protégé, apprentice or partner interchangeably, while others had carefully deliberated about specific terms and selected one because of the particular meaning it carried for them. A first step toward facilitating communication among mentoring programs and strengthening their public voice would be to develop a set of definitions for the most commonly used terminology in the field.

There is a wide range of training models, academic requirements and regulations among mentoring sites and states, and these continue to pose challenges to the development of uniform guidelines and career development paths (Morgan, et al., 1993). Because there are no national regulations for early care and education programs and training, it is apparent that federal mentoring standards are out of reach at this time. One alternative is to establish the role of mentor in state professional development systems. Another proposal for future consideration, however, would be to assess the value of creating a national accreditation process that would establish voluntary standards addressing:

- prerequisites for mentors and protégés;
- curriculum content, including study topics and course structure;
- program goals, including definitions of the characteristics of mentors and protégés and the competencies to be achieved.

Mentoring program requirements, however, should not become so rigidly focused on educational background that excellent teachers and providers without formal training are excluded from participating. Instead, by defining *competencies* and establishing ways to measure them, mentoring programs can be more inclusive, fostering recognition and respect for caregiver skills that are built through a variety of approaches. It is a widely held belief in the mentoring field that mentoring is a developmental process, an approach to adult learning that ideally extends throughout one's professional life. From this vantage point, efforts to rigidly or strictly define mentoring may actually undermine the process they are intended to support. In many ways, the discussion of standards among mentoring proponents mirrors the broader debate within the child care field about the relative merits of formal education versus more informal training.

## ACCESS

There is growing concern in the child care field that professional development opportunities are often restricted to better-educated and predominately white teachers and providers, who tend to be informed about opportunities and to possess the educational background and credentials to qualify for admission. Without attention to issues of access for poorer caregivers and people of color in child care settings, programs can end up developing a pool of mentor teachers that is disproportionately white and middle class.

Lack of access to mentoring programs can also be a result of geographic isolation, or of the segregation of program types that is so common in early childhood education. Head Start teachers, for example, generally do not learn about child care training

opportunities, and family child care providers often do not know about resources that are primarily geared to center-based staff. The following strategies can ensure that mentoring programs become more widely available to a diverse pool of teachers and providers in their community:

- Involve a representative group of participants, including teachers and providers from many program types, in all phases of program planning, design, implementation and evaluation.
- Use a variety of formats for meetings and training, including retreats, conference calls, interactive video, and electronic and regular mail. Participants should have input in determining what will work best for them.
- Attend to transportation, child care needs and other costs that might prevent people from participating in meetings and training.
- Build scholarships and payment for substitutes into the program budget, in order to ensure that a lack of financial resources does not inadvertently exclude anyone.
- Pay attention to the linguistic needs of your community, arranging for multilingual materials and translators whenever necessary.
- Establish a range of mentor and protégé criteria that include competency-based learning in addition to formal education.
- Design a mentor selection process that empowers rather than intimidates people. Provide alternative measures of competency, using observation and interviews rather than only transcripts, essays and recommendations. The development of a competency-based tool for mentor selection and evaluation would be a strong addition to the field. Several programs currently use the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale or the NAEYC or NAFCC accreditation tools in their selection process; before using any evaluative tools, programs should assess them in terms of cultural sensitivity.
- Establish a menu of milestones for mentors and protégés, rather than a single goal which may not be feasible for everyone. These might include achieving licensing or accreditation, or completing the next level of one's education.
- Invest energy and resources in recruitment and selection processes. Think about who you would like to involve in the program, and design strategies to reach them. This may involve visiting a family child care association meeting or attending center staff meetings to give people an opportunity to find out first-hand about the mentor program.



- Budget for and recruit qualified substitute teachers and providers to ensure that mentors and protégés have time to meet and work together.

## LEADERSHIP AND ADVOCACY

Cultivating leadership is an inherent part of mentor training programs, because mentors are called upon to act as leaders and role models for other caregivers. As mentors build their understanding of adult development and their skills in communicating and supporting others, they also build their capacity for leadership. And as part of a core group of skilled and dedicated practitioners, mentors often become advocates for public policies that encourage better-quality child care. Frequently, in public debates about whether or not to support mentoring programs, it is the voices of mentors themselves that carry the most weight. In California, advocates' pleas for solid financial support for the mentor program were largely ignored until mentor teachers and providers stepped forward to fight proposed budget cuts.

The voice of mentors also carries a great deal of weight with fellow teachers and providers. Because mentors have managed to advance their skills and to achieve a new level of professional and financial recognition, they communicate a sense of possibility and hope to their co-workers about child care as a viable career option.

One can hardly be a mentor without becoming a leader and advocate. It must be recognized, however, that mentors have differing levels of skill and self-assurance, particularly with respect to advocacy. For some it is a daunting concept, conjuring images of forceful public speeches before crowds or public officials. Mentors need to know, therefore, that there is a broad range of advocacy-related activities in which they can take part, and that becoming an advocate is a learning process like any other. In other words, mentor teachers need mentoring not only about classroom practices, but about advocacy and leadership for the child care field.

In this vein, the California program requires mentors to attend an ongoing monthly seminar, a component of which is exploring advocacy and leadership development. The mentoring seminar becomes an opportunity for participants to strengthen their public voice. Since mentors plan and implement classroom changes with the adults with whom they work, it's a natural progression for them to take part in identifying more systemic policy changes that are needed in the larger community to improve teachers' and providers' work environments.

## CURRICULUM

The mentoring curriculum should contain both theoretical and practical applications that involve participants in supported field experiences. The fieldwork should relate to the content of structured courses or seminars, and involve teacher educators in field support activities.

Beginning teachers and providers, however, have very different developmental tasks and training needs from those who are more advanced and experienced (Katz, 1972). The developmental sequences in professional growth patterns and teacher stages of development, necessitate variations in the timing and introduction of certain topics (Katz & Weir, 1979). Curriculum developers and instructors will need to address these issues as they relate to program design and content.

The relationship process between mentors and protégés is central, and programs should avoid overwhelming this key ingredient of mentoring with an extensive required curriculum. At their best, programs can reach a "working balance" that allows ample opportunities for mentors and protégés to meet and communicate. While curriculum can be the framework or starting point in the mentoring relationship, time and emphasis should be placed on interactions and interpersonal work.

Among mentoring programs now operating across the country, the variety of curricular structures includes one-day intensive workshops, week-long seminars, and year-long college courses for graduate or undergraduate credit. Some mentor programs have direct links with community colleges in statewide networks. Others relate to private colleges and state universities, where issues of course credit articulation and transferability are now being addressed.

There is growing interest in the mentoring field in examining and refining the core content of mentor/protégé curricula across program types, age groups of children, roles of practitioners (e.g. home-based providers, directors, or teachers in schools, Head Start programs or centers), and adult stages of development. Program developers, mentors and protégés need more opportunities to meet and to further refine curricular models. While they by no means produced a definitive list of all the subjects involved in the process of mentoring education, Roundtable participants identified and discussed the following six essential areas of curriculum content.

### Adult Development

The process of human development continues throughout the life span. For professionals in early care and education, daily interactions with other adults bring about changes and growth with each other and in the field. Caregivers' knowledge of child development

helps them to guide children as they grow, learn and evolve. Similarly, their knowledge of adult development can help their own professional growth and that of their colleagues. A curriculum module in this area might discuss such topics as:

- theories about the stages of adult development, and of parenting;
- the implications of adult development theory for the child care workplace;
- caregivers' own stages of professional growth and development in caring for young children;
- reflection on who and what have been important to participants' own development as teachers or providers.

## Reflective Practice

It is not easy for early childhood professionals to find time to think critically about what they do, and how and why they do it. Nonetheless, caregivers generally do reflect on their practices--but often at "stolen" moments, such as on the way to and from work. By structuring time and space to reflect on their teaching as well as conversing with others about theirs, caregivers' practices can be improved and enriched, and their commitment deepened. Topics in this area could include:

- a discussion of how reflection can help teacher/providers grow and make improvements in their work;
- peer coaching; self-assessment tools and techniques;
- respect for racial, cultural, economic and gender differences;
- ways to build time for reflection into everyday practice.

## The Process of Change

Understanding how change happens and what it means to adults and children in early childhood settings can transform classrooms and communities into more dynamic, interactive learning environments. Change is a process; like all aspects of human development and growth, it is personal and often difficult, but it is an integral part of the purpose of early care and education for young children. Topics in this area could include:

- key ingredients in building positive communication, and establishing an atmosphere of safety and trust;
- effective principles in giving and receiving feedback;
- ways to set and meet achievable goals between mentors and protégés;

- barriers to, and benefits of, the process of change in the classroom;
- ways to approach making changes in one's own teaching and learning environment.

## Diversity, Equity and Culturally Relevant Anti-Bias Education

Teachers and providers guide children along a path toward positive self-identify, knowledge, critical thinking skills, and respectful interactions with all types of people. This path, of course, continues into adulthood, and so it is essential for adults who support these goals for children to work together creatively and cooperatively themselves. But as with children, adults are often at different stages of awareness and development in relation to issues of bias and inequity. Topics in the area of diversity and equity could include:

- anti-bias theory; the goals and operating principles of anti-bias education, and common barriers to achieving it;
- ways to assess classrooms from an anti-bias perspective;
- how mentors can become more sensitive to different learning and teaching styles;
- culturally and linguistically appropriate practice in early care and education;
- the ways in which caregivers' own values shape their interactions with peers, children and families.

## Leadership Development and Advocacy

The leadership of teachers and providers is evident in their daily interactions with young children and their families. Together, mentors and protégés are creating new opportunities for leadership while learning to find their voices, articulate what they know to wider audiences, facilitate and share power, name and understand barriers they face, and find solutions--strengthening themselves and the profession as a whole in the process. Topics in this area could include:

- support mechanisms which teachers/providers need in order to become leaders in the classroom, and in the field;
- ways in which mentors and protégés can contribute to local and national efforts to improve caregivers' compensation and access to training;
- the establishment of a National Mentoring Alliance.

## Mentoring Roles

The role of the mentor is manifold--a seeker of resources, an observer, a positive role model, a coach, a guide and a listener. Topics in this area of curriculum could include:

- discussions that seek to define mentor teachers and protégés, and the nature of their relationship;
- differences between mentoring and supervision;
- ways in which mentoring partnerships can improve caregivers' professional self-confidence and recognition.

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Roundtable participants were divided about the issue of college credit for the mentoring process. But those advocating for it believed that specialized training in the area of mentoring should carry college credit, and/or that continuing education units should meet qualifications for certification, licensing, and promotions within centers or family child care home systems. Others were concerned that the link to higher education might exclude competent teachers and providers who lack access or preparation for college courses. College credits, if part of a mentor program, should not create an additional financial burden for mentors and protégés.

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## PART VI

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

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Greater opportunities to share information about their experiences and to learn from one another are a primary need of those who establish, operate and participate in early childhood mentoring programs. Although these programs have emerged in response to shared problems of staff recruitment, training and retention in the field, their particular features have been driven by local needs and resources. As a result, there is a wealth of variety and creativity in how the programs are structured and supported, and practitioners and participants need access to this information as well as opportunities to explore shared concerns.

### AN EARLY CHILDHOOD MENTORING ALLIANCE

As a primary next step for the field, mentoring program representatives agree on the need for a national Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance that would:

- provide a clearinghouse for information exchange about mentoring programs;
- convene networks of mentors and program developers, and plan training opportunities;
- compile a list of Alliance members who are available to share information about their programs and to offer technical assistance, consultation and training to others;
- take leadership in policy development, assisting advocates at the state and local levels in building support for mentoring programs as an early childhood career path;
- produce an ongoing form of communication, such as a newsletter or on-line service, to cover program development, relevant research and advocacy efforts;
- hold an annual forum or conference for mentoring programs.

The National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force, in collaboration with the Centers for Child Care Policy and Training at Wheelock College, has agreed to coordinate the planning and formation of such an Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance. NCECW has already received several positive expressions of interest in the Alliance from private foundations.

## OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

### Resource Materials for Mentoring Programs

Roundtable participants recommended that resources on the following topics be developed by the Mentoring Alliance, and made available to assist programs in planning and implementation:

- detailed descriptions of program models which can guide local discussions of options;
- strategies for identifying key community "players," to ensure the broad support that is essential to program success;
- budget analyses of various program models and components, current and potential sources of funds for mentor programs, and strategies for describing and justifying program costs, as a guide for fundraising and planning efforts;

- model documents for typical program components such as the mentor application and selection process, contracts describing child care employers' and mentors' respective obligations, sample descriptions and outlines for training classes offered to mentors and protégés, and articulation agreements between training institutions;
- descriptions of recruitment and selection processes for mentors and protégés, including recommendations for mentor prerequisites, the development of competency-based, culturally relevant tools to assist in these procedures, and strategies to ensure the racial, cultural and economic diversity of participants;
- strategies for ensuring realistic expectations among mentors, protégés and employers regarding time commitments, available resources, substitutes and other program requirements;
- training formats that best support the specific needs of caregivers who work with infants, toddlers, school-age children and children with special needs, as well as training models for directors and administrators;
- program models and materials that address the needs of mentors and protégés from linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- documentation and evaluation instruments.

In addition to developing and disseminating the materials outlined above, the Alliance would convene two groups which would meet annually at a Mentoring Institute:

### A Program Developers' Network

Mentor programs have been initiated by a wide variety of players. In most communities, early childhood program directors, teacher educators and other child care advocates have led the way in implementing programs, encouraging the involvement of trainers, college administrators, state officials, corporate sponsors and foundations along the way.

A Program Developers' Network would create a forum for information exchange among all those with an investment in the creation, strengthening and expansion of mentor programs. Along with having a Network of their own, mentor teachers and providers would be equal partners in the Program Developers' Network to ensure that their experiences and perspectives are represented and considered.

## A Mentor Network

This Network would be composed of teachers and providers functioning as mentor teachers in their communities. The Mentor Network would serve to: 1) provide support, resources and training for mentors to enhance their specific programs; 2) build mentors' skills as leaders and advocates for the field; and 3) develop an organized voice to advocate for mentoring programs at the local and national levels. Several mentors who participated in the national Roundtable have already agreed to serve on a committee to guide the development of the Mentor Network. All mentors in established mentoring programs will be invited to join.

## CONCLUSION

We greatly appreciate your interest in mentoring programs as an emerging career opportunity for the early childhood profession. For more information about mentoring programs or the national Early Childhood Mentoring Alliance, please call or write us at the National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force.

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## APPENDICES

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### References

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## Agenda

### MENTOR TEACHER PROGRAM ROUNDTABLE: Refining an Emerging Career Path

Sponsored by National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force and the Centers for Child Care Policy and Training, Wheelock College in conjunction with the National Association for the Education of Young Children, Professional Development Institute

June 1 & 2, 1994 • Chicago, Illinois

#### Wednesday Evening, June 1

6:30-7:30 Registration, Informal Networking

7:30-9:30 Evening Program

*Welcome and Introductions*

**Claudia Wayne**, Incoming Executive Director, National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force

*Mentoring: An Important Stage in Our Profession's Development*

**Patty Hnatiuk**, Director, Child Care Training, Wheelock College

*Building a Skilled and Stable Work Force Through Mentoring*

**Marcy Whitebook**, Founding Executive Director, National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force

Mentor Teacher Testimonials

Participatory Activity

Review of Thursday agenda; logistics

#### Thursday, June 2

8:00-9:00 Breakfast, Informal Networking

9:00-10:30 *Initiating, Implementing and Expanding Mentor Programs: Best Practices and Barriers*

**Jackie Fitzgerald**, California; **Peggy Harrelson**, Virginia; **Nancy Johnson**, Minnesota; **Laura Kurcharski**, Wisconsin; **Margaret Mobley**, North Carolina; **Pat Mucci**, Massachusetts; **Cal Williams**, Michigan

10:30-10:45 Break

10:45-12:00 Work groups on Initiation, Implementation and Expansion of Mentor Programs

12:00-1:00 Networking Lunch

1:00-1:30 *Summaries of Principles, Key Practices and Supports Needed for Initiating, Implementing and Expanding Programs*

**Work Group Chairs**

1:30-1:45 *Institutionalizing Mentor Programs: Critical Issues*

**Patty Hnatiuk and Marcy Whitebook**

1:45-2:00 Break/Select Work Groups

2:00-3:00 Work Groups on *Standards, Accessibility, Funding/Compensation, Advocacy, Curriculum and the National Mentor Network*

3:15-4:00 Work Group Reports, *Defining Next Steps, and Evaluation*

Work Group Chairs and Full Group

4:00-5:00 Informal Networking

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## The National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force

The National Center for the Early Childhood Work Force (NCECW), formerly the Child Care Employee Project, is the nation's leading advocate for upgrading the compensation and training of child care teachers and providers. We are working to create a unified and powerful voice for the child care work force, advocating for fair and decent employment for caregivers and reliable, affordable, high-quality care for families.

Our landmark *National Child Care Staffing Study* (1988; updated 1992) clearly established the link between the quality of care that young children receive and the level of compensation that child care teachers are paid. NCECW is also the national coordinator of the Worthy Wage Campaign, a grassroots effort to mobilize child care workers to fight for solutions to the child care staffing crisis.

Our organization was founded in 1977 by child care teachers in the San Francisco Bay Area concerned about the low pay and status of their work. We relocated our offices to Washington, DC. in the summer of 1994.

Please call or write us for a list of our publications and for more information about our activities.

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**We've Changed Our Name!**

As of January 1998

National Center for the Early  
Childhood Work Force (NCECW)  
became

**NATION**

**Center for the Child Care Workforce (CCW)**

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