

Guidelines for Mentoring

with First Nations, Metis, and/or Inuit Communities

The following document and associated tools have been developed with the kind and generous support of Bent Arrow Healing Society, Full Circle Mentoring Program in Wood Buffalo, BBBS-Calgary, and BBBS-Edmonton. The guidelines are intended to support community-based groups and organizations that are striving to develop and deliver quality mentoring programs to children and youth of Aboriginal descent. They are based upon research and the combined expertise of those who are already doing this important work. They should be used in conjunction with other valuable resources such as the *Handbook for Aboriginal Mentoring* and *Mentoring Programs for Aboriginal Youth*.

Although the term mentor is uncommon in most Aboriginal communities, the concept of mentoring is not. Historically, mentoring in Aboriginal communities was embedded in cultural practice in which the entire community contributed to raising and teaching its youth. Today, many of these social and cultural structures that guided and supported youth have been eroded and dismantled. Reintroducing the practice of mentoring with First Nations, Metis and Inuit (FNMI) communities is an important part of preventing and addressing many of the challenges that these youth face as they grow up in a changing society. To support the development of a mentoring program with Aboriginal children and their families it is important to maintain all of the quality and risk mitigation strategies essential to safe and effective mainstream programs. At the same time, you will need to be open to doing things differently - to listening, learning and adapting to meet the needs and preferences of the particular community you hope to work with.

The guidelines set out below are intended to augment the mainstream tools available on the [AMP website](#) by providing specific resources to strengthen your work with FNMI communities. They are intended to build on those foundational resources to support you and your partners as you move through this work – helping you to negotiate and make the most of diversity so that you can support the development and implementation of quality mentoring programs that build on the strengths of the community and foster resilience and pride in the young people.

Tool 1

[Building a Mentoring Program with First Nations, Metis, and/or Inuit \(FNMI\) Communities](#)

Tool 2

[Assessing Strengths & Needs - Questions to Consider](#)

[Mentor Program Coordinator Position Description](#)

Tool 3

[Tips For Creating An Inclusive Advisory Group](#)

Tool 4

[Pluralism – Work Together For More Than Diversity](#)

Tool 5

[Tips to Recruit and Retain Aboriginal Mentors](#)

Early Considerations

Things to think about as you begin to develop a program. Taking the time to build relationships, understand the specific community, and explore promising practices and existing successes will help lay the foundation for a quality program that addresses specific needs and strengths in the community. Attached below are a number of things you will want to consider as you begin to build a mentoring program for FNMI children and youth.

Assessing Strengths and Needs for a Program

Some questions to think about. Before you move ahead to design and implement a program using the tools and resources provided on the AMP website, it is important to clearly identify the need for your program – the who, the what and the where. Use the questions attached to connect with the community and other agencies to begin to assess community strengths and needs for a mentoring program and to look at your own time and capacity to support a program.

Program Staff and Inclusive Advisory Committees

The size of your staff will depend on the size and scope of your program. At the very least, you will need a program coordinator (Larger programs may need more than one coordinator. Some programs have one paid staff person and designate other program responsibilities to a team of committed volunteers, advisory committee members or, in the case of school-based or supported programs, a teacher, guidance counsellor or liaison worker). Whenever possible hire a program coordinator who has the skills required and who is of Aboriginal descent. When this is not possible hire a coordinator with experience working with FNMI communities or who is respected by the community. Use the link to the conventional mentor program coordinator job description, and modify it to include the unique requirements of your program.

It may also be important to create some sort of advisory committee. This committee should include appropriate representation from the FNMI community. Use these tips to create an inclusive advisory committee.

To be successful, an inclusive advisory committee must be more than just bringing diverse people around the table. The committee must be governed by a willingness to listen and to understand each other's differences, and a commitment to build a program that celebrates these differences. Use the attached definitions of pluralism as a tool to support constructive dialogue among your committee members.

Tips for Recruitment and Retention of Aboriginal Mentors

These suggestions are meant to augment more conventional recruitment and retention strategies. They include unique things you may want to consider in efforts to attract Aboriginal volunteers to your program.



[Mentor Application
and Screening Process:
An Overview](#)

[AMP Online Application form](#)

[Screening Guidelines](#)

[Sample Mentee Referral form](#)

[Sample Parent Consent form](#)

Tool 6

[Tool 6A: Things To Consider
When Training Non-
Aboriginal Volunteers](#)

[Tool 6B: Things to Consider
When Training Aboriginal
Volunteers](#)

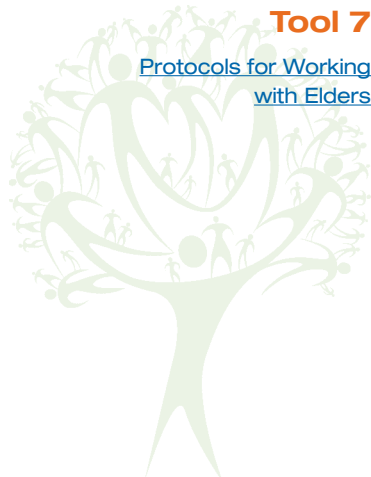
[Supervision: Types
and Processes](#)

[Supervision Guidelines](#)

[Guidelines for Termination](#)

Tool 7

[Protocols for Working
with Elders](#)



Screening

It is important that rigorous risk mitigation and safety precautions are in place for all mentoring programs. Refer to AMP's screening guidelines for both mentors and mentees as the basis for your screening processes. Consider the following suggestions to adapt mainstream processes so they are more appropriate for FNMI volunteers and families.

- Work with your advisory committee to adapt application and interview forms so that they are appropriate to the community you are trying to reach.
- Build relationships with potential mentors before you begin a formal interview process.
- Minimize the amount of information required from potential mentors and mentees.
- Only gather information that is essential for safety and to develop appropriate program content. Remember that questions that are common on mainstream application forms may not be appropriate on these forms. Again, rely on your advisory committee to review and vet all of your forms and processes.
- When appropriate work with school Aboriginal Liaison workers to connect with families and support the recruitment and screening of potential mentees.

Training

Training for volunteers who want to work with Aboriginal children and youth should begin with a standard mentor training program. AMP has developed an online training program for mentors and an online guide to child safety. It is essential that your mentors and mentees participate in these trainings before they are matched or your program begins. Right click here to find out more about [AMP's Online Training](#). It will be important that you provide support to mentors and mentees to access this training and that you follow up with additional in-person and program specific training.

In addition to this standard training you will need to include training and information related to working with Aboriginal communities generally and with the young people in your community specifically. Attached are some suggestions to consider when training Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal mentors.

Supervision

Please refer to AMP's standard resources and guidelines to support quality supervision and monitoring.

Protocols for Working with Elders

Some guidelines to consider. Experience suggests that any mentoring program targeted specifically for FNMI children and youth will benefit from the inclusion of elders in planning processes, on-going oversight and directly in program activities. Each community will have specific protocols for interacting with Elders. The guidelines that are attached are relatively generic and should be supported by specific information from the community you are working with.

Community Engagement

Ongoing engagement with the community will be essential for the program's longer term success. Below are some suggestions to support your efforts to engage parents, guardians and the broader community:

- Try to meet with parents in person. Work with your advisory committee to make connections and identify an appropriate person to be a family/community liaison for the program.
- Host an open house and invite family and community members to take part.
- Invite parents to take part in or observe the program whenever they are able.
- Also engage with parents in a meaningful way. Don't just ask them to come but ask them to come and do something specific. Help them to feel valuable. See parents as an asset, a resource for the program.
- Organize regular family nights where parents can come with their other children. Provide food if possible. Invite Elders and other important community members if possible.
- Organize a community feast early in the program, mid-way through the program and at the end of the program. Prepare traditional food if possible. Include families, elders, community members, and school staff if appropriate.
- Remember that building relationships with the broader community is essential to program success. Make this an explicit part of your program planning and ensure that someone is responsible for this important work.

