

Virginia Star Quality Initiative Mentoring Program

(Quality Rating & Improvement System)

Guidelines for Mentors

The Virginia Star Quality Mentor is responsible for assisting early child care and education programs, developing a two-year quality improvement plan and working with administrators, directors, family child care providers, and teachers to implement changes, support parent involvement, and connect programs with community resources. Mentors provide training and technical assistance to help programs establish developmentally appropriate learning environments and curriculum, and to serve children with special needs.

GETTING STARTED

- After Local Coordinator contact, call the facility to schedule the initial meeting with the Director
- Determine the amount of time you will need for the initial meeting by:
 - explaining what you need to cover in the initial meeting, and
 - verifying what the Director and staff need to discuss
- Recognize that the initial visit may be overwhelming, requiring the topics to be broken down into manageable components

INITIAL MEETING

- Tour the facility
- Meet each classroom teacher and assistant teacher that you will be mentoring
- Determine the knowledge level the Director and teachers have of ITERS-R, ECERS-R, Pre-K CLASS, Toddler CLASS in order to determine the tools you will be using
- With the Director, jointly select the day and time for your mentoring visits
- Discuss the Director's expectations for mentoring
- Discuss any previous experiences the Director has had with mentoring
- Clarify your role and that of the Director and staff
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- Discuss any questions and concerns

ONGOING VISITS

- Establish a regular schedule for your visits
- Confirm your visit the day before and remind the Director of the visit purpose
- Arrive for the meeting on time

- During the visit, take thorough notes of the discussions and your observations
- Verbally summarize what you thought was accomplished at the end of the visit
- Identify any necessary follow-up for each person involved in this visit and determine the goals for the next visit
- Remember to thank the Director and each staff person you worked with during the visit
- If an unannounced visit is needed to drop off resources, keep the visit brief

PROFESSIONALISM & APPROPRIATE ATTIRE

- Always be respectful of all staff and treat them as professionals
- Maintain professional boundaries while developing the relationship(s)
- Be patient and build trust
- Wear comfortable clothing if you will be interacting in a classroom with the children
- Casual professional dress is expected; jeans are not appropriate attire for a QRIS mentor
- Be mindful that you are representing the Virginia Star Quality Initiative

ONGOING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR MENTORS

- Continued training is required
- Continued review of the observation instruments is recommended
- Mentors are required to fulfill professional development responsibilities mandated by their locality
- Mentors should attend locality meetings as directed by their Local Coordinator

CONFLICT OF INTEREST POINTS

- Mentors currently employed at an early childhood program may not act as that facility's QRIS mentor
- State funds cannot be used to supplant an existing staff-mentor position in an early childhood program

REVIEWING THE SUMMARY REPORT

The Local Coordinator will provide you with the Summary Report. Review the report and contact the rater (face to face or phone) to clarify any questions about the report. Use the report as a guide to develop the content of your QIP recommendations.

Focusing on change and the impact of change

- Be patient and build rapport with classroom teachers
- Consider teacher's teaching experiences with age of children in the classroom
- Explain why changes are needed
- Practice good listening techniques, including reflective listening

Focusing on "Technical" change (materials, etc.)

- Promote technical change through the addition of activities in ITERS-S AND ECERS-R
- Add materials to the interest centers
- Make materials accessible on low shelves within easy reach of the children
- Increase portable equipment used with children in outside activities
- Visible change is generally more receptive

Focusing on "Adaptive" change (moving from teacher directed to child-directed)

- Adaptive change is more difficult for teachers to see
- Adaptive change deals directly the teacher's perception of their job responsibilities
- Adaptive change may impact types of art offered and reduce whole group activity time
- Adaptive change should be approached individually with the teachers and in small steps
- Creating a safe environment for questions to be asked is essential for progress
- Space changes and allow teachers time to deal with each change before implementing more change and goal setting

Assisting in determining what materials will be purchased

- ITERS-R and ECERS-R scales and reference book *All About* are recommended purchases
- Encourage teacher-made games purchases
- Purchased materials should be useful tools to assist quality movement upward

DEVELOPING THE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN (QIP)

The Quality Improvement Plan is to be completed and submitted to the Local Coordinator no more than 1 month after the program has received the Program Rating Summary Report . The Mentor, Director/Administrator and staff work together to develop the QIP. The goals should be based on the rater's findings as stated in the report. The Mentor, Director/Administrator, and staff prioritize the goals and decide on the time frame for each goal to be addressed. At least one goal must be listed for each standard. All of the goals should be listed on pages 1 and 2 of the QIP form. Goals for each quarter should be listed under the appropriate standard area of the quarter(s) designated for work on the goal to take place. Review to ensure that all sections of the form are completed.

- When the QIP has been developed, submit it to the Local Coordinator for review and comments
- Upon completion of the mentoring process, the QIP must be submitted to the Local Coordinator
- The Local Coordinator submits the completed QIP to Virginia Early Childhood Foundation

THE QUARTERLY IMPROVEMENT PROGRESS REPORT AND CONTACT SUMMARY FORM

The Mentor must complete the Quarterly Improvement Progress Report form and the Contact Summary form. Both of these forms are submitted to the local Coordinator. The Local Coordinators will review these forms and submit the Quarterly Improvement Progress Report to Virginia Early Childhood Foundation for review.

- Mentors who are unable to fulfill their duties and meet time lines will be removed from the approved list
- Local Coordinators are required to inform the Hub regarding any Mentor performance issues

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL MENTORING

Plan Ahead: Make certain you review all of your notes prior to each visit, including the QIP. Remember to take the necessary materials and resources you need for each visit.

Minimize Distractions: Make it a practice to minimize disruptions to everyone's schedule – the Director, the teachers, and the children. Remember the care of the children is always the first concern of the center staff and your visit may have to be rescheduled if the center is not adequately staffed the day of your visit.

Use language that is simple, direct, and understandable: This is a learning process. Teachers may feel overwhelmed and confused when you use language that is not familiar to them. Observe their classroom to get a feel for their level of understanding of best practices. Ask clear, direct questions and use positive language when talking to the teachers about their classroom.

Remain calm if you see inappropriate practices: You are in the center to help facilitate the process of change with appropriate practices. This is something that must be learned and cannot be dictated. Effective modeling and helping a teacher who is experiencing frustration helps build healthy mentoring relationships. If a safety issue arises, address it immediately with the teacher and the Director.

Offer constructive suggestions: Maintaining a positive relationship with the center staff is of great importance during the mentoring process. When suggestions are offered, they should be phrased positively. Focus on why the suggestion may bring about positive change.

Model appropriate practices: Effective mentoring may also include modeling specific strategies in the classroom for the teachers. This works best when there is an agreed upon focus for the modeling.

Explain the purpose for the suggested change: Be certain to use all of the instruments (including the All About Books) as resources when explaining proposed improvements to the classroom.

Always follow through with tasks you have committed to complete: The mentor should always be mindful that mentoring occurs not only while at the center but also in the follow up responsibilities. Be certain to set a professional example and follow through with any tasks you have committed to complete.

Change can be difficult

It is important to use a variety of approaches to lead change...

- Continually provide coaching and teaching on the new concepts and behaviors
- Understand the impact that the changes will have on an individual's schedule, workload, time, priorities, etc.
- Figure out how behaviors and attitudes will have to change to make new processes work.
- Provide encouragement and feedback continuously along the way to maintain motivation, and increase understanding of the importance of the change
- Collect data to assess whether changes are being made, staff reactions to the changes, and the impact of the changes.
- Provide adequate time for staff to focus on improvement efforts.
- Celebrate success – allow staff to take pride in improved outcomes.

RESOURCES

Milestones of Child Development (Virginia's Early Childhood Alignment Project)

Competencies of Early Childhood (Virginia's Early Childhood Alignment Project)

All About The ITERS-R (Cryer, Harmes, Riley)

All About The ECERS-R (Cryer, Harmes, Riley)

1/29/10