

CHAPTER 8

IOWA YOUTH MENTORING PROGRAM CERTIFICATION

The purpose of the Iowa mentoring partnership is to certify mentoring programs that meet standards outlined in the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™, published by the National Mentoring Partnership, that have been established for youth mentoring programs. The Iowa mentoring partnership also provides training, resources and support services to local mentoring programs. In partnership with certified programs, the Iowa mentoring partnership strives to increase the capacity of mentoring programs, raise statewide awareness of the positive benefits of mentoring children and youth, promote effective screening and safety procedures, and enhance the quality of mentoring relationships in Iowa.

[ARC 9574B, IAB 6/29/11, effective 8/3/11; ARC 0439C, IAB 11/14/12, effective 12/19/12]

817—8.1(15H) Definitions.

“Certification” means the process for identifying youth mentoring programs as meeting the criteria for effective practice in order to become eligible for financial and technical assistance.

“Commission” means the Iowa commission on volunteer service.

“Conditional certification” means a temporary certification identifying a youth mentoring program before the program is fully operational in order for the program to apply for financial and technical assistance.

“Mentoring certification application” means the application, which was developed by the Iowa mentoring partnership and Iowa commission on volunteer service and which can be adopted by all agencies and departments of state government to determine an applicant’s designation as a certified mentoring program. The application contains information that can be used to determine an applicant’s designation as a certified mentoring program.

“Mentoring program” or *“youth mentoring program”* means a program that provides older mentors to youth, provided that the program meets all of the following requirements:

1. The program is located in this state;
2. The program is operated as a public or private not-for-profit entity, part of a school or area education agency, or part of a faith-based community;
3. Youth served by the program are between the ages of 5 and 23.

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817—8.2(15H) Certification. Based on each mentoring program’s self-assessment (completed via the mentoring certification application), the commission is responsible for ascertaining whether a youth mentoring program is qualified to be designated as a certified mentoring program.

8.2(1) Full certification. Before a mentoring program can participate in the Iowa mentoring partnership, it must be certified by the commission.

a. A review team shall review applications from youth mentoring programs to determine whether the mentoring programs are eligible to participate in the program.

b. Full certification means the commission has determined that the youth mentoring program has met the established standards.

c. Applications for mentoring program certification are available from the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, 321 East 12th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319 and the Iowa mentoring partnership’s website (www.iowamentoring.org).

d. Applicants shall receive written notification of the commission’s decision.

e. To remain in good standing as a program with full certification, mentoring programs must verify continued certification by submitting required reports.

8.2(2) Conditional certification. Some mentoring programs are temporarily certified before the program becomes fully operational or before the program has met the standards for full certification.

a. Conditional certification may be in effect for six months and may be used for the purpose of applying for financial and technical assistance available to certified mentoring programs. The commission may grant an extension of conditional certification if it is determined that significant progress is being made toward meeting the requirements for full certification.

b. The mentoring program name will not be included on the Iowa mentoring partnership Web site, nor will the program be referred potential mentors, until the mentoring program has been fully certified. The Web site of the Iowa mentoring partnership is www.iowamentoring.org.

c. It shall be the responsibility of the mentoring program to notify the commission when the program believes it has met the certification criteria.

d. Additional documentation may be required of new mentoring programs to verify elements of the application. Mentoring programs may be requested to provide documentation of continued eligibility at any time during and after conditional certification.

8.2(3) *Recertification.* Certified youth mentoring programs shall submit verification of continued eligibility to the commission at least every two years.

a. The form for recertification shall be provided by the commission.

b. Other documents and regular reporting will be requested throughout the certification period to verify the continuing eligibility of the mentoring program.

8.2(4) *Documentation.* Various and specific documentation may be required by the commission during the certification process. Each program shall provide relevant information upon the commission's request in order to be considered for certification.

Applications shall be signed by an authorized representative of the organization.

8.2(5) *Reapplication.* A mentoring program may reapply upon proof of compliance with Iowa youth mentoring program certification standards. Any program that is denied certification or decertified for any reason bears the burden of proving that all deficiencies previously cited have been corrected. Corrections shall be in accordance with requirements of the Iowa mentoring partnership. Applications may be requested from the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, 321 East 12th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319, or the Iowa mentoring partnership's website (www.iowamentoring.org).

8.2(6) *Notification.* The commission shall be notified within 30 days following a change in the mentoring program director or authorized representative of the certified mentoring program.

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817—8.3(15H) Description of application. The Iowa mentoring partnership application requires information about individuals who manage and administer the local mentoring program.

8.3(1) Specific questions are included on the application regarding mentoring program operations, screening and safety procedures, training, number of mentors and mentees, structure of the program, and other information to determine whether the program meets the certification standards established in rules 817—8.4(15H) and 817—8.5(15H).

8.3(2) Information contained in the application may be reviewed by the applicant upon request to the Iowa Commission on Volunteer Service, 321 East 12th Street, Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Material to be added to a file may be sent to the commission at the above address.

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817—8.4(15H) Basis for certification standards. The commission has established standards to certify youth mentoring programs. These standards are based on the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™, published by the National Mentoring Partnership. These elements are based on the work of a panel of experts convened by the National Mentoring Partnership to produce a set of rigorous mentoring guidelines, providing the gold standard for quality mentoring for more than a decade.

8.4(1) *Statement of purpose.* The mentoring program should have a statement of purpose and a long-range plan that includes:

- a. Who, what, where, when, why, and how activities will be performed.
- b. Input from originators, staff, funders, potential volunteers, and participants.
- c. Assessment of community need.
- d. Realistic, attainable, and easy-to-understand operational plan.
- e. Funding and resource development plan.
- f. Risk management plan.

8.4(2) *Recruitment plan.* The mentoring program shall have recruitment plans for both mentors and participants that include:

- a. Strategies that portray accurate expectations and benefits.
- b. Year-round marketing and public relations strategies.
- c. Targeted outreach based on participants' needs.
- d. Volunteer opportunities beyond mentoring.
- e. A goal of serving at least 12 youth, computed as an average of the number of youth served over the preceding three program years.

8.4(3) *Orientation.* The mentoring program shall have an orientation for mentors and mentees that includes:

- a. Program overview.
- b. Description of eligibility, screening process, and suitability requirements.
- c. Level of commitment expected (time, energy, flexibility).
- d. Expectations and restrictions (accountability).
- e. Expected benefits and rewards of the program.
- f. A separate focus for potential mentors and participants.
- g. A summary of program policies, including but not limited to policies on written reports, interviews, evaluations, and reimbursement.
- h. Definition of appropriate and inappropriate contact, and a statement that informs mentees and parents/guardians on how to report inappropriate contact.

8.4(4) *Eligibility.* The mentoring program shall have eligibility screening for mentors and participants that includes:

- a. A written application and review process.
- b. A face-to-face interview and, for community-based programs, a home visit.
- c. Reference checks for mentors, which may include character references, a child abuse registry check, a driving record check, and a criminal record check as legally permissible.
- d. Suitability criteria that relate to the program's statement of purpose and needs of the target population. Criteria may include some or all of the following: personality profile, skills identification, gender, age, language, racial requirements, level of education, career interests, motivation for volunteering, and academic standing.
- e. Successful completion of prematch training and orientation.

8.4(5) *Training curriculum.* The mentoring program shall have a readiness and training curriculum for all mentors and participants that includes:

- a. Knowledgeable trainers.
- b. Orientation to the program and resource network, including information and referral, other support services, and schools.
- c. Skills development as appropriate.
- d. Cultural/heritage sensitivity and appreciation training.
- e. Guidelines for participants on how to get the most out of the mentoring relationship.
- f. Dos and don'ts of relationship management.
- g. Job and role descriptions.
- h. Confidentiality and liability information.
- i. Crisis management/problem-solving resources.
- j. Communications skills development.
- k. Ongoing sessions as necessary.
- l. Information on what is considered inappropriate contact and what to do if such contact occurs.
- m. Information regarding safe meeting spaces and meeting place guidelines and restrictions.

8.4(6) *Matching strategy.* The mentoring program should have a matching strategy that includes:

- a. A commitment to consistency.
- b. A grounding in the program's eligibility criteria.

c. Appropriate criteria for matches, including some or all of the following: gender, age, language requirements, availability, needs, interests, preferences of volunteer and participant, life experience, and temperament.

d. Staff assistance with the first meeting.

8.4(7) *Monitoring process.* The mentoring program should have a monitoring process that includes:

a. Consistent, scheduled meetings with staff, mentors, and participants.

b. A tracking system for ongoing assessment.

c. Written records.

d. Input from community partners, family, and significant others.

e. A process for managing grievances, praise, rematching, interpersonal problem solving, and premature relationship closure.

8.4(8) *Mentor support and recognition.* The mentoring program should have a support, recognition, and retention component that includes:

a. Ongoing peer support groups for volunteers, participants, and others.

b. Ongoing training and development.

c. Relevant discussion of issues and dissemination of information.

d. Regular mentor recognition and appreciation.

8.4(9) *Closure.* The mentoring program should have closure steps that include:

a. Private and confidential exit interviews regarding the mentoring relationship between:

(1) Participant and staff;

(2) Mentor and staff; and

(3) Program staff and teachers or parents or both, as appropriate.

b. Clearly stated policy for future contacts.

c. Assistance to participants in defining future steps for achieving personal goals.

8.4(10) *Evaluation.* The mentoring program should have an evaluation process based on:

a. Outcome analysis of the program and mentoring relationships.

b. Program criteria and statement of purpose.

c. Informational needs of board, funders, community partners, and other supporters of the program.

8.4(11) *Additional certification standards.* The commission also utilizes the Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring™, published by the National Mentoring Partnership, to determine the primary areas of review for mentoring program certification. These areas are intended to indicate whether programs are operating under the quality policies and procedures established by a national panel of mentoring program experts, researchers and others.

a. *History of operation.* Mentoring programs shall have an established history of operation of two years (24 months). Programs that have been operating less than 24 months may be granted full certification but will be required to provide quarterly updates to the Iowa mentoring partnership.

b. *Length of match.* Mentoring programs shall meet minimum requirements for length of match based on program type.

(1) Community-based programs, including E-mentoring programs, shall establish an initial commitment of one year with new or potential mentors.

(2) School-based programs, including E-mentoring programs, shall establish an initial commitment of nine months with new or potential mentors.

c. *Minimum monthly contact.* Mentoring programs shall meet minimum requirements for monthly contact based on program type.

(1) Matches in community-based programs shall meet for a minimum of four hours per month with a consistent schedule.

(2) School-based programs shall meet for a minimum of two hours per month with a consistent schedule.

(3) E-mentoring programs shall have contact via secure, supervised e-mail a minimum of once per week.

d. *Background checks.* Mentoring programs shall meet minimum requirements for checking the background of mentor applicants.

- (1) Criminal background and sex offender registry checks for mentors over the age of 18.
- (2) Reference checks for mentors under the age of 18.
- e. *Pre-match mentor training.* Mentoring programs shall meet minimum requirements for training of mentors. At least two hours of pre-match training and preparation activities shall be provided to new mentors.

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817—8.5(15H) Special consideration. In addition to the standards set forth in rule 817—8.4(15H), the commission may give consideration to other factors to determine certification status in order to ensure that only high-quality youth mentoring programs are certified.

8.5(1) On-site audits. At the discretion of the commission, on-site audits may be conducted to determine certification.

8.5(2) Reporting. Programs that fail to submit required documentation are at risk of decertification and may be deemed ineligible to receive the benefits of certification, including complimentary training registration and inclusion on the Iowa mentoring partnership Web site.

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817—8.6(15H) Decertification. A youth mentoring program shall be decertified by the commission if it is determined that the program no longer meets the certification standards identified herein for a high-quality mentoring program, if program personnel cannot be contacted by the commission, if the program fails to provide documents requested by the commission or if the program fails to complete the required Iowa mentoring partnership quarterly reports.

8.6(1) Written notice of the intent to revoke certification shall be provided to a youth mentoring program when the commission determines that there is reasonable cause to believe the program does not comply with the rules contained herein. Notice shall be sent by United States mail at least 20 days before decertification becomes effective.

8.6(2) If the commission sends a letter by first-class mail to the last-known address provided to the commission by the youth mentoring program and the letter is returned as undeliverable, this may be considered grounds for decertification.

8.6(3) Decertification procedures may be initiated by the commission or following investigation of a complaint filed by the general public. A request for an investigation from the public must be in written form and shall specify the reason(s) why the certified youth mentoring program no longer meets the certification standards. Supporting documentation may be attached to the request. The identity of the complainant is confidential pursuant to Iowa Code section 22.7(18).

8.6(4) Benefits and designation as a certified mentoring program will continue until the final decision is issued by the commission.

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817—8.7(15H) Fraudulent practices in connection with certified mentoring programs. A person is considered to be guilty of a fraudulent practice if the person knowingly falsifies information on an application for the purpose of obtaining certification and any other potential benefits, including those offered through the Iowa mentoring partnership or other state contracts and grants available only to certified mentoring programs.

The commission may investigate allegations or complaints of fraudulent practices and will take action to decertify a youth mentoring program upon concluding that a violation has occurred.

A violation under this rule is grounds for decertification of the youth mentoring program responsible for the violation. Decertification shall be in addition to any penalty otherwise authorized.

817—8.8(15H) Appeal procedure. Commission decisions regarding certified mentoring programs may be contested by an adversely affected party as detailed in 817—Chapter 5.

These rules are intended to implement Iowa Code chapter 15H.

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