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 long-range plan that include:

  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.

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.

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.

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 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.

[**ARC 9574B**, IAB 6/29/11, effective 8/3/11]