



May 8, 2019

Subject: Equitable Mentoring Best Practices

Background

We have a wealth of knowledge and experience within the Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) and if we are going to continue to grow and flourish as an organization, we need to ensure that we are all learning from each other. Specifically, experienced managers, supervisors, and journey-level workers have a special responsibility to pass their institutional knowledge and wisdom to other aspiring staff members. As succession planning becomes more and more important across all industries, you may find that you want to become a mentor to someone at RPD, or that someone at RPD asks you to become their mentor. The Human Resources Working Group of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee on Equity (DICE) wants to ensure that any mentor-mentee relationships that are established at RPD are done so in a fair and equitable way.

Please see the below equitable mentoring best practices that the working group has established. This listing of best practices is intended to help you establish productive mentoring relationships and to keep those relationships free of favoritism, discrimination, or nepotism – real or perceived.

Equitable Mentoring Best Practices

1. Within work groups, there may be certain experienced and productive individuals that stand out for certain tasks and duties. To ensure that everyone receives an opportunity to expand their skillset, help coordinate rotations of tasks and duties to ensure fair and equitable treatment for all staff. This type of cross-training will help staff long-term, as well as the organization.
2. Allow mentees to control decisions when possible and ask open-ended questions for feedback and insights.
3. Be transparent and honest with your staff or coworkers. Communicating clearly that you are willing to help any of your staff prepare for the next steps in their career, is important.
4. Make a safe space for your mentee, one of the most important aspects of a mentor-mentee relationship is trust. Allow your mentee to ask any questions they may have about their industry without fear of judgment and avoid talking negatively about others.
5. Trade Chivalry for Common Courtesy. Chivalrous behavior, such as carrying tools and insisting on paying for coffee, "creates a negative power dynamic that undermines an individual's confidence and competence and may make that person feel indebted." Instead, exhibit common courtesy that you would show any person.
6. Support and encourage all staff members to participate in department special events (Eggstravaganza, Scaregrove), holiday events (MLK luncheon, St. Patrick's Day, etc.). This can help promote comradery, learning, and build cultural awareness.
7. Be self-aware of one's own distractions (multi-tasking, "go mode", lack of eye contact, interrupting or talking over people), be present when approached by staff for a conversation. All staff need support and acknowledgement, regardless of the matter being discussed.



8. Offer your services at a staff meeting. Let your group know that you want each of them to be successful, and that if they need any career advice or want to expand their skillset in a specific way, they can seek you out and request a meeting. Ensure that you offer this service to *everyone* - double check the sign-in sheet for the staff meeting, follow-up with anyone that was not present, and hold onto the sign-in sheet for documentation purposes.
9. Keep your work group together and on the same page, set a schedule (or suggest a schedule) of team meetings. Every team should have ongoing meetings to discuss goals, outcomes, and encourage participation in departmental events like workshops, brown bags, trainings, etc. At these meetings, allow the team to discuss successes, failures, lessons learned, and any grievances they may have. Keeping open communication is a key to maintaining a positive work environment.
10. Your mentee may have a completely different personal background than yours, but they may also have the *same* career goals that you did when you started. Understand that regardless of any differences in your personal backgrounds, you may be able to connect with your mentee over career goals and technical knowledge.
11. At regular staff meetings, encourage everyone to seek out development opportunities and participate in professional groups (CPRS, NRPA, etc.) – and bring back lessons learned so that the whole team can learn from their experiences.