

NJAPZA Mentor Program: Duties and Responsibilities

Mentoring is a one-on-one partnership between two individuals focused on the common goal of professional growth and skill development through a strong learning and sharing relationship.

The mentoring process depends on an experienced land-use professional the expertise and desire to help someone new to the field become more confident and knowledgeable and to achieve his or her work-related goals and objectives. For mentoring to be successful, both parties must be committed to the process and to following a few basic program rules.

The support offered by a mentor can extend beyond what an employee receives from the Rutgers certification program, on-the-job training or supervision by a manager, and may include help with interpersonal communications, work habits, or other professional issues.

A mentoring relationship involves a time commitment from both mentor and mentee. It is essential that participants discuss this issue up front to make sure there is a clear understanding of what each expects from the other. There is no set framework for a mentoring relationship; each relationship is different. Meetings occur according to schedules determined by the pair: some may meet once a week, others once a month, and others possibly every few months. Some pairs meet in person, while in other situations mentors and mentees communicate by phone and e-mail. These specifics are agreed to by the mentor and mentee at the beginning of their relationship, and can be modified along the way.

The mentee is responsible for explaining his or her primary objectives with the help of the mentor. The mentor is charged with guiding the mentee toward realizing those goals.

Mentor Qualifications

- ✓ Membership in NJAPZA
- ✓ At least five years of experience
- ✓ Completion of a Rutgers certificate and current with certificate renewal
- ✓ Willingness to attend an orientation meeting and complete a questionnaire
- ✓ Willingness to keep a log of mentoring activities/interaction
- ✓ Willingness to complete a survey at the end of the first year of the program

Mentee Qualifications

- ✓ Membership in NJAPZA
- ✓ Less than five years experience
- ✓ Willingness to sign the hold harmless agreement
- ✓ Willingness to attend an orientation meeting and complete a questionnaire
- ✓ Willingness to abide by all program guidelines and those set by the mentor
- ✓ Willingness to complete a survey at the end of the first year of the program

What Mentoring Is NOT

Mentoring is not a substitute for the study and hard work a new land-use professional must undertake to learn the technical aspects of planning and zoning.

Mentoring is not therapy. If a mentee is having difficulty at work, it is essential to identify why, and decide whether mentoring is the appropriate avenue to solve that difficulty. An employee may have a personality conflict with a supervisor, in which case a mentor might be able to suggest ways to keep that relationship on a professional rather than a personal level. But the mentoring relationship should not develop into a situation where the mentee expects the mentor to help solve his or her personal or emotional problems.

Mentors agree to...

- Take the mentoring commitment seriously.
- Recognize the time commitment and be willing to follow through on it.
- Participate in all mutually agreed-upon forms of contact with the mentee, including face-to-face meetings, phone conversations and emails
- Practice confidentiality
- Tailor feedback to provide encouragement.
- Keep an interaction log to be shared with the Mentor Program Committee
- Model professionalism—what a good employee should be and do.
- Attend meetings with other mentors as required by the Mentor Program Committee
- Refrain from reprimanding the mentee and recognize that his or her role is not to evaluate the mentee.
- Be prepared to notify the Mentor Program coordinator if the mentoring relationship if it isn't working

Mentees agree to...

- Take the mentoring commitment seriously
- Have realistic expectations
- Be willing to assume responsibility for their own personal development and success on the job
- Recognize the limitations of the program
- Refrain from over-reliance on the mentor as a substitute for doing his or her “homework”
- Participate in any required Program activities
- Practice confidentiality
- Accept constructive feedback from the mentor and provide honest feedback to the mentor
- Be prepared to notify the Mentor Program coordinator if he or she experiences and problems or is unhappy with the mentoring relationship
- Be prepared to change or end the mentoring relationship if it isn't working.