Selecting an Effective Mentor

The initial professional role transition experience of the New Graduate is felt with varying intensity, is founded upon relatively predictable fundamental issues, and exists within individually motivated and fluctuating states of emotional, intellectual and physical well-being (Duchscher, 2009). Studies show that nursing mentorship is beneficial for novice nurses in their decision to remain in nursing, on their self-confidence, problem-solving, professional communication, and transition to practice (Gularte-Rinaldo, 2023).

It is vital that we ensure the mentors participating in the Transition to Practice Program (TTP) model exemplary practice and behaviours. Mentors require various personal characteristics, attitudes, values, motivation, problem-solving abilities, and commitment to their work all while showing patience, positivity, communication and listening skills, authenticity and enthusiasm (Weaver, 2021).

Many studies agree that having more than five years of nursing experience is ideal when assuming the role of a mentor. However, given the current distribution of nursing seniority, it is not always realistic to expect every mentor within Health PEI to meet this threshold. To ensure a successful mentorship experience, a minimum of two years of nursing experience is recommended for mentors.

Nurse managers play a vital role in ensuring that mentors participating in the Transition to Practice (TTP) program meet the criteria necessary to support a positive and successful transition period for new staff. Along with the PEICNM Supervision Policy, the following evidence informed considerations can assist managers in selecting appropriate mentors for the program:

CNA 2004 (p.40) divides mentor competencies into 4 main categories:

1. Personal Attributes

1. Demonstrates effective communication skills.
2. Displays respect, patience and good listening skills.
3. Demonstrates trustworthiness in working relationships.
4. Demonstrates a positive attitude, enthusiasm, optimism and energy about the work environment, nursing, and mentoring.
5. Expresses belief in the value and potential of others.
6. Is open and accepting of the diversity of others.
7. Demonstrates confidence.

2. Modelling Excellence in Professional Practice

1. Displays commitment to nurses and to the nursing profession.
2. Displays commitment to the goals of the organization or the team.
3. Demonstrates strong knowledge, judgment, skill and caring in their domain of practice.

4. Is credible and respected by colleagues, the organization and the community.
5. Demonstrates critical thinking by challenging ideas, knowledge and practice, as appropriate.
6. Actively expands knowledge base using research evidence and remains current with latest thinking and best practices in area of expertise.
7. Uses an ethical framework to guide professional practice and interpersonal relationships.
8. Uses socio-political knowledge of the organization to work effectively within or beyond the system.
9. Conveys ability to see the "big picture" (historical, political or systems context).
10. Uses a strong and diverse network to collaborate with others in the work setting and the broader. system (i.e., health care system and wider community, where relevant).
11. Demonstrates effective negotiation and conflict-resolution skills.

3. Fostering an Effective Mentor/Mentee Relationship

1. Establishes trust and maintains confidentiality.
2. Makes time for the mentoring relationship and is approachable and welcoming.
3. Demonstrates respect for the mentee as an individual and belief in the mentee's potential.
4. Demonstrates caring for the well-being of the mentee.
5. Nurtures the mentee by providing support, encouragement and a safe relationship.
6. Provides honest feedback and gentle confrontation; becomes a "critical friend".
7. Engages mutually in the mentoring relationship (i.e., is willing to share of self and is open to personal change).
8. Reflects on own interactions to challenge, stimulate and support the mentee.
9. Collaborates and negotiates in setting the purpose, goals, process, boundaries and evaluation of the mentoring relationship.
10. Plans for appropriate closure or transition of the relationship.
11. Celebrates achievements and successes with the mentee.
12. Respects mentee's right to make decisions, but recognizes when it is ethically necessary to intervene to prevent harm.
13. Demonstrates an understanding and respect for the power differential between the mentor and mentee.

4. Fostering Growth

1. Coaches the mentee towards goal achievement
    a. Encourages the mentee to identify own strengths, gaps and growth potential
    b. Supports the mentee in the selection of appropriate and realistic goals
    c. Guides the mentee to identify options/activities to meet goals

    d. Encourages the mentee to identify realistic timelines for goal achievement reflecting work and life balance
    e. Guides the mentee to select an optimum level of challenge within their role, setting or domain of practice (e.g., range of goals, incremental levels of difficulty or complexity)
    f. Guides the mentee to identify, clarify, define and manage barriers, problems and issues
2. Facilitates the mentee's access to a wide variety of resources and opportunities to meet goals (e.g., journals, space, activities, people, literature, agencies, interest groups, committees, funding)
3. Encourages independence and autonomy
    a. Encourages the mentee to reflect on own growth or achievements and future actions
    b. Questions, probes and guides the mentee to explore new perspectives and insights
    c. Knows when to provide direction and when to challenge the mentee
    d. Encourages learning from mistakes and/or disappointments
    e. Guides the mentee to avoid pitfalls and manage crises
    f. Guides the mentee to develop own leadership in practice
    g. Chooses an appropriate balance when contributing own experiences (i.e., good story-telling and metaphors), as relevant
    h. Guides the mentee to develop effective negotiation and conflict-resolution skill
4. Encourages the mentee in a process of visioning through free thinking, creativity and innovation, as relevant to the setting
    a. Challenges the mentee by offering new ideas, knowledge and practices
    b. Assists the mentee to enhance the quality of the professional practice environment and to initiate change, where relevant and possible
    c. Assists mentee to identify an alternate view of the future that may not be seen by mentee (i.e., looking at the "big picture", seeing beyond the details)
    d. Assists the mentee to identify patterns, themes and trends and to acquire new perspectives
    e. Encourages and supports the mentee in risk taking (i.e., in developing new knowledge, skills and innovations for the workplace
5. Facilitates the mentee's integration within the organization and larger professional community, as relevant to the setting
    a. Shares professional networks with mentee
    b. Helps the mentee navigate the system
    c. Shares informal rules

d. Promotes the mentee by communicating their successes within the organization and the profession
e. Shares ideas about opportunities for advancement
f. Encourages the mentee to engage in professional leadership activities such as presentations, partnerships, specialty associations
g. Acts as a champion for the mentee
h. Solicits corporate (i.e., organizational) support for the mentee

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