



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services STEP Up: Skills Training for Experienced Professionals

Participant Workbook Module Seven: Peer Mentoring and Reflective Practice

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**PUBLIC
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Instructions

This course was designed to guide child welfare professionals through the knowledge, skills, and behaviors needed to engage with families in need of child protection services. The workbook is structured to help you engage in the lesson through reflection and analysis throughout each module of training. Have this workbook readily available as you go through each module to create a long-lasting resource you can reference in the future.

If you are using this workbook electronically: Workbook pages have text boxes for you to add notes and reflections. Due to formatting, if you are typing in these boxes, blank lines will be “pushed” forward onto the next page. To correct this when you are done typing in the text box, you may use delete to remove extra lines.

Training Overview

STEP Up: Skills Training for Experienced Professionals is designed to strengthen and refine the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of child welfare professionals through structured, practice-focused learning.

Training sessions are intentionally designed to support active engagement, reflection, and application. Each module includes a combination of lecture, guided discussion, individual practical application, and collaborative debrief. This structure allows participants to connect new learning to their existing experience and apply concepts directly to their daily practice.

Attendance and participation are essential to the learning experience. If an emergency prevents attendance, participants are responsible for notifying the trainer and their supervisor as soon as possible and developing a plan to address missed content.

Learning Expectations

STEP Up builds on prior experience in child welfare practice. Participants are expected to:

- Engage actively in discussions and activities
- Reflect on their current practice and identify areas for growth
- Apply learning to real-world scenarios
- Collaborate with peers to strengthen practice and shared understanding

Transfer of Learning

A core component of STEP Up is the application of learning to practice. Throughout the training, participants will engage in structured reflection and practical application activities designed to support transfer of learning.

Participants will:

- Reflect on how new concepts align with their current work
- Identify specific actions to strengthen their practice
- Apply learning between sessions, when applicable

- Engage in peer discussion and collaborative problem-solving
- Supervisors and ongoing professional supports play a critical role in reinforcing learning and supporting continued development in the workplace.

All matters as stated above are subject to change due to unforeseen circumstances, and with approval.

STEP Up Module Seven Learning Objectives

Module 7
Reflective Leadership and Mentoring
Upon completion of this course, learners will be able to: • Define peer-mentoring and its benefits • Identify their role in mentoring staff and specific opportunities for mentoring peers • Describe phases of a mentoring relationship and details strategies to build a mentoring relationship and culture including developing working agreements and goals

Module Seven Agenda

Module Seven: Peer Mentoring and Reflective Practice

Module Timing: 180 Minutes

Welcome

Section 1: Peer Mentoring

Section 2: Reflective Practice

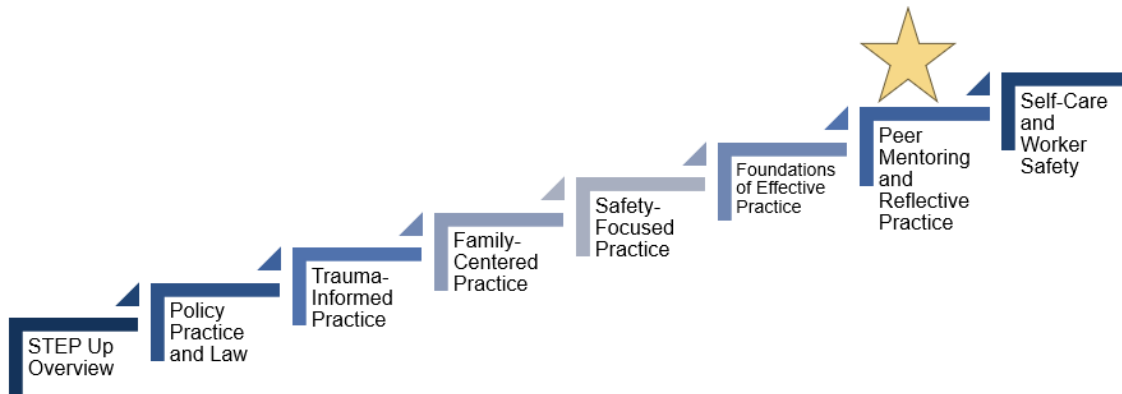
Section 3: Individual Practice and Application

Section 4: Debrief and Collaborative Practice

STEP Up: Skills Training for Experienced Professionals

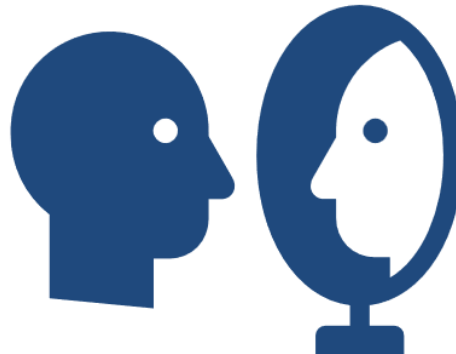
Module Seven: Peer Mentoring and Reflective Practice

Step Up Course Series Outline and Structure



Peer Mentor Reflection

- Think of a peer mentor you had in the past
- What qualities did you appreciate in your peer mentor?



Notes

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Section 1: Peer Mentoring

What is Peer Mentoring?



Peer mentoring is a supportive relationship between colleagues at similar levels, where one shares knowledge and guidance to help the other grow. Peer mentoring differs from traditional mentoring because it's non-hierarchical and peers support one another.

Key characteristics of peer mentoring:

- Mutual support
- Knowledge sharing
- Focus on growth

Notes

Benefits of Peer Mentoring



Reduce burnout



Improve well-being



Enhance job satisfaction



Promote retention

Peer mentoring creates a culture of support that improves morale, engagement, and overall organizational health.

Role of Experienced Staff as a Mentor



Share
knowledge and
expertise



Offer guidance
and support



Model
professional
behavior



Foster growth
and
development

Experienced staff brings valuable insights from real-world experience. Sharing lessons learned will help your peers avoid common mistakes and understand the bigger picture.

Notes

Opportunities for Peer Mentoring: the “What and Where”



Peer mentoring is about being intentional in everyday interactions. Whether during high-pressure moments or casual conversations, these opportunities help create a culture of support, resilience, and shared growth in child welfare.

Notes

Techniques and Tips for Successful Peer Mentoring



Establish Trust



Be Approachable and Supportive



Share Lessons Learned



Guide rather than Direct



Demonstrate Best Practices

Successful peer mentoring is built on trust, communication, and mutual respect. It's about guiding, not directing, and creating a culture of shared growth.

What strategies have you used to build trust with a colleague?

How can you show support without taking over someone's work?

What is one lesson you've learned that could help a peer avoid a mistake?

What behaviors do you think peers notice most during stressful situations?

How do you ensure feedback is helpful and not discouraging?

Building a Mentoring and Coaching Culture



Normalize mentoring as a standard part of professional development



Model mentoring behaviors: professionalism, empathy, collaboration



Offer informal support: quick check-ins, share resources, encourage peers



Promote reflective practice: ask open-ended questions, create safe spaces



Celebrate progress: acknowledge milestones, share success stories



Outcome: Continuous learning, mutual support, strengthened resilience

When these actions become part of your daily work, you help create a culture where learning is continuous, support is mutual, and resilience is strengthened.

Notes

Establishing a Peer Mentor Relationship

5 Stages of Establishing a Peer Mentor Relationship



Notes

Section Two: Reflective Practice

Defining Reflective Practice

Peer Mentor Relationship	Reflective Process	Peer Mentor Techniques
• Holding space • Providing a container • Trust, safety, collaboration, and respect	• Deliberate process • Exploration of focus areas	• Collaborative process • Asking questions • Active listening • Empathizing • Reflecting back • Teaching and guiding

Reflective practice provides a structured yet dynamic framework for peer mentoring that promotes insight, learning, and professional growth. Effective reflective practice uses observable techniques such as setting purpose, active listening, empathizing, and guiding to sustain the mentoring process.

Notes

Promoting Reflective and Critical Thinking in High-Pressure Work

Activity: System Two Thinking



Activity Instructions

Purpose: To promote critical thinking of opportunities for peer mentoring even in a high-pressure work environment, using the concepts of System 2 thinking

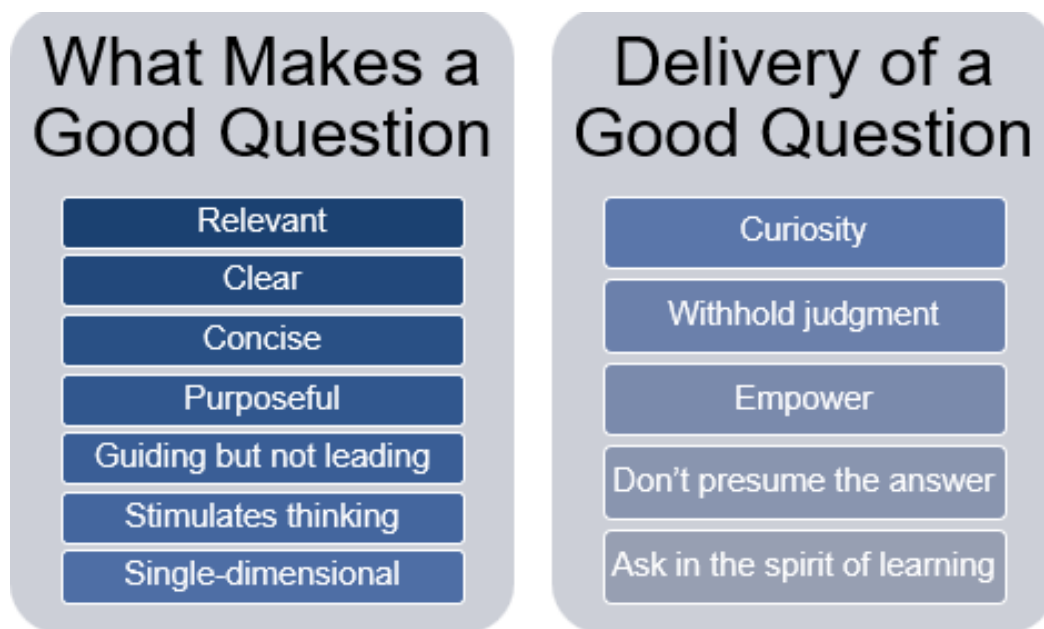
- Participate in a large group discussion on formal and informal peer mentoring opportunities

In what ways does peer mentorship actively use System 2 thinking?

What are some spaces you have mentored a peer in or have been mentored in?

What tips do you have for your peers regarding supporting peers in such chaotic times?

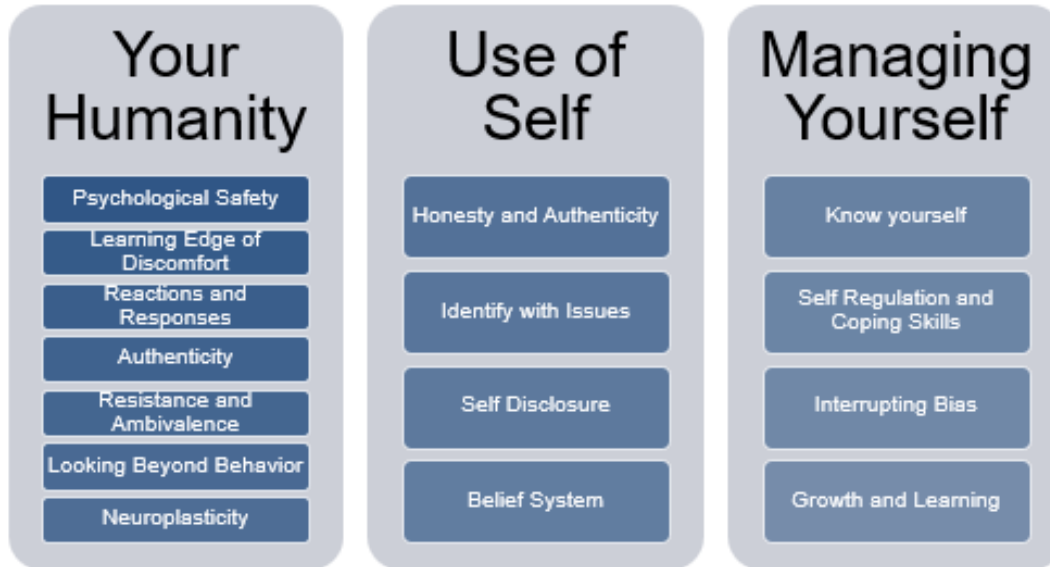
Ingredients of a Great Question



Effective questions are relevant, clear, concise, and purposeful, guiding peers toward understanding without leading to specific answers. Good questions stimulate critical thinking and focus on one concept at a time, promoting learning and skill development. The delivery of questions should embody curiosity, withhold judgment, and empower peers to find their own solutions.

Notes

Managing Yourself First: Embrace Your Humanity in Practice



Managing yourself first is a coaching principle that is essential in peer mentoring as well.

Notes

Additional Information: Manage Yourself First

Self-Regulation

The first step to practicing self-regulation is to recognize that everyone has a choice in how to react to situations. It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters most.

In every situation, you have three options: approach, avoidance, and attack. Become aware of your emotions. Do you feel like running away from a difficult situation? Do you feel like lashing out in anger at someone who has hurt you?

Monitor your body to get clues about how you are feeling, such as a rapidly increasing heart rate.

Self-Regulation Strategies

- **Mindful Breathing:** Practicing Mindful breathing techniques keeps you grounded, present in the moment, and decreases stress, anxiety, and anger. Meditation also helps in providing self-control that guides your actions when times are difficult.
- **Reframe Negative Thoughts:** Having negative thoughts is normal, but those who understand self-regulation well make sure that for every negative thought, they provide a solution. Part of this strategy is taking a step back as soon as you have a negative thought and reframing the thought with a positive solution.
- **Self-Affirmations:** Using affirmations when you are overwhelmed, like ‘I am getting better every day’ or ‘I can do this,’ helps you to perform at your best, even when you struggle to find motivation.
- **Visualization Technique:** When you are not sure of your purpose or wondering about what to do next, visualization techniques like vision boards or rehearsals could really assist you in self-regulating.
- **Body Awareness & Sensations:** Exercise is important to alleviate everyday stress. It is critical to check in on how your body reacts to different situations and sensations. Mindfulness practice can be very helpful with this.
- **Form Bedtime Routine:** Adding a new routine before sleeping can promote self-regulation. This new activity could be reading 2-5 pages of a book, thanking God for the day, or brushing your teeth. Keep it simple!
- **Compliment Someone:** Making a commitment to complimenting someone every day makes you stronger emotionally and improves your relationships. A simple compliment like ‘You are looking great today’ or ‘It was a good speech that you just gave’ are great ways to start.
- **Gratitude List:** Start a list in a journal of all the things you love in your life, as it keeps reminding you of goodness.
- **Express Yourself:** Any activity that you love aligns your mind and body for better coordination. Add a new skill, for example, dancing, painting, design, singing, or reading, so you can express your emotions in a better way.
- **Reinforcement:** Reward yourself with something exciting if you achieve the goal. For example, you had a busy and productive day, but you finished your goal, and you treat yourself to your favorite meal, which you planned to do if you obtained your goal.

Coping Strategies:

- Spend time in nature. Try to aim for 120 minutes a week.
- Box breathing. Five minutes of long, deep breaths will relax your nervous system.
- Reframe your situation. Think about how you can reinterpret your “negative” situation to see it as an opportunity for growth.
- Lean on a friend. Make plans with a friend and share your struggles.
- Journal. Write for 20 minutes straight about whatever is heavy on your mind.
- Break your tasks into small bits. If you’re overwhelmed, break your big task into little ones.

- Improve your situation. Think about the one action you could take to help improve your circumstances.
- Exercise. Even 20 minutes can help! Exercise supports every health benefit you can think of.
- Plan a small vacation or stay-cation, even if it's just a few hours. Schedule YOU time.
- Self-care pillars are water, sleep, and food. Drink a little more water, sleep the amount you need, and eat healthily.
- Clean. You can relax in your space with just 15 minutes of straightening up.
- Seeking support from a therapist can make a big difference.

Interrupting Bias

Day-to-Day Strategies

- Examine how you treat families, youth, caregivers, providers, peers, etc. If you find you are treating some with preferable treatment and others not, actively work to change your thinking, body language (more open), empathy, engagement, and inclusion of those who were treated differently or excluded.
- Acknowledge the importance of all contributions to the work.
- Respond to double standards, stereotyping, “manterruption,” “bropropriating,” and “whipeating.” Pay close attention to how you, co-workers, and providers talk about each other and families, interruptions when people are talking, monopolizing conversations, etc. Maintain rules to increase participation from all. Call out bropropriating” or “whipeating”, which is when majority-group members take or are given credit for ideas that women and people of color originally offered.
- Call out practices when you see bias and mistreatment of families and youth.
- Advocate for fair and just treatment and equity in access to needed resources for families and youth.

Parallel Process: a Tool of Peer Mentoring



“Humans process new information and anticipate new situations via previously established schemas and scripts.”

Kevin St. Arnaud

What does this quote mean to you?

How does it relate to being a Peer Mentor?

Reflection: Lessons Learned from Peer Mentors

Activity: Sharing Lessons Learned from Peer Mentors



- Consider one or two lessons you have received from peers who mentored you
- Share these lessons on the collaborative tool

Activity Instructions

Purpose: To foster self-reflection and build a sense of appreciation for the role of peer mentorship in child welfare practice.

- Consider one or two lessons they learned from peers who have mentored you during your professional experience
- Follow the instructions from the trainer on how to share your experiences and insights

How have these lessons shaped your child welfare practice?

Section 3: Individual Practice and Application

Individual Practice Application

Activity: Individual Practice Application

Purpose: To provide you with dedicated time for self-reflection and application of course concepts to your own practice, fostering deeper learning and personal insight.

You have one (1) hour dedicated to completing the individual Practice and Application activities in this Participant Workbook.

You will use this time to reflect on your why, the shifting child welfare landscape (socioecological model), complete the Practice Standards Self-Assessment or review your results from earlier, and create an ecomap of those in your work community following the instructions below.

Your facilitator will remain online for support.

You may turn off your video, but do not leave the virtual room.

All participants will reconvene in one hour to share responses to this Individual Practice and Application.

Self Reflection Team Contributions**Identifying Your Why**

Directions: Review your reflections on your why from day one and respond to the following reflective questions.

Reflecting on Your Why

How has your why changed over the years?

What is your why now?

How do you inspire your peers through knowing your why?

Additional Why Reflections:

Socioecological Model

Directions: Review your responses regarding the Socioecological Model from Day One and respond to the reflective questions below.

What has been your role in these changes?

In times of change, how do you show up as an advocate and mentor?

What resources internally and externally have you used to improve practice?

Who are the change agents and those you have access to support practice?

How do you share the resources you have found to navigate the system and support your peers?

Practice Standards Self-Assessment Reflection:

Directions: Review your Practice Standards Self-Assessment from day one and consider the following reflective questions.

What are my strengths in Communicating, Engaging, Assessing, Planning, and Implementing?

What are my opportunities for growth in Communicating, Engaging, Assessing, Planning, and Implementing?

How do I use my strengths to support my practice and peers?

Who are my support people to help me with my opportunities for growth?

Community of Practice (CoP) Ecomap

A community of practice is a group of people who share a common concern, role, set of problems, or area of interest and learn together through ongoing interaction (Community of Practice, n.d.). Child welfare communities of practice promote the sharing of best practices and knowledge.

Revisit the Ecomap of professional influences from Day One, which includes colleagues, peers, and mentors. Think back to those professional influences who provide support and those who contribute to strain or tension, and any gaps in your community of practice.

Directions: Review of CoP Ecomap Identifying Professional Influences from Day One and answer the following reflective questions.

Who are your support people who can support you in integrating new skills and concepts from this training into practice?

Where are there gaps in your CoP Ecomap that you would like to develop further supports, and who could help you develop these supports?

Peer Mentoring Goal Setting

Directions: Answer the Reflective Questions below.

Peer Mentoring Reflective Questions:

What strengths have I identified for myself throughout this training?

What other strengths do I have?

How can I share these strengths? How do I share top resources to navigate the system or resources with my peers?

What areas do I want to develop further to increase the quality of my practice and support peers?

Section 4: Debrief and Collaborative Practice

One Thing Learned, and One Thing Taught

Activity: One Thing Learned, and One Thing Taught

Activity Instructions

Purpose: To promote reflection on what you learned and what you can share with and teach your coworkers.

- Participate in a large group discussion or respond in the chat, answering the slide questions

What is one thing you learned through this training that you can confidently share with others?

What is one thing you have taught your co-workers, either previously or during this training?

Community of Practice Eco-Map Report Out

Activity: Community of Practice Eco-Map Report Out

Activity Instructions

Purpose: to promote participants in developing your own support network and mentoring others in the areas you feel confident and competent in

- Turn to your responses in your Application Practice section of the Participant Workbook
- Task 1
 - Share in your small group examples of your support group and how you plan to use your support network
- Task 2
 - Part 1: Share in your group what you feel confident and competent to mentor others
 - Task 2 Part 2: Add your responses to the Word Cloud or chat as directed by the trainer
- Be prepared as a group to report on highlights from the group's discussion

Notes

Community of Practice Accountability Partners

Activity: Community of Practice Accountability Partner

Activity Instructions

Purpose: To promote accountability and support for one another in goal setting

- In pairs, share one of the goals you developed with your partner in the Peer Mentoring Goal Setting Individual Application Activity
- Discuss the type of support you both need to complete your goals and obtain your desired outcome
- Exchange contact information and schedule a follow-up in 3 months
- Utilize the Individual Goal and Peer Mentoring Development Plan that follows to document your goals and plans

Notes

Activity: Community of Practice Accountability Partners

Instructions: Complete this form during the NC STEP Up Training and within your first week after training to identify skills and peer mentoring goals you would like to develop further. Review progress at least quarterly, making any edits or new goals. Start with no more than 3 goals. It may be helpful to pick a short-range goal (within a month or quarter), a mid-range goal (within 6 months to a year), and a long-range goal (over 1 year).

Individual Goal and Peer Mentoring Development Plan

Name:		Date Plan Developed:	
Follow-up Date:		Date Revised:	

Goal: <i>Include the skill or peer mentoring practice you would like to develop further</i>	Resources to Support Growth in Coaching: <i>Name of Supervisory or Name of Peer Support/ Accountability Partner</i> <i>Shadowing Opportunities, or Training</i> <i>Podcasts, Articles, Books, etc.</i>	Action Steps: <i>Specific Actions you will take</i>	Timeframe to Review: <i>Specific timeframe to revisit and check in on progress</i>	Notes on Progress and Next Steps: <i>When you review your goals, enter updates here and follow-up steps. Start on a new line if you decide on a new goal.</i>

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Name:		Date Plan Developed:	
Follow-up Date:		Date Revised:	

Goal:	Resources to Support Skill or Peer Mentoring:	Action Steps:	Timeframe to Review:	Notes on Progress and Next Steps:

Closing Wrap Up

Activity: Closing Wrap Up

Activity Instructions

Purpose: To promote transfer of learning in the areas of peer mentoring and reflective practice

- Reflect on the slide questions for three minutes
- Follow additional prompts provided by the facilitator

Notes

Key Takeaways

Peer Mentoring Defined	
Reflective Practice	
Techniques for Success	
Building a Mentoring Culture	
Manage Yourself First	

Notes

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