

Strong Foundations:

The Right Match Between Mentors/Journeyworkers and Apprentices Creates Success in ECE RA Programs

Why Does Pairing and Matching Matter?



Creating a supportive, collaborative relationship is the key to apprentices' professional and personal growth in Early Childhood Education (ECE) Registered Apprenticeship (RA) programs. A **mentor** focuses on an apprentice's personal needs, career goals, and the connection of theoretical knowledge to practical application. A **journeyworker** focuses on providing hands-on learning opportunities for the apprentice to apply new knowledge, technical skills, and classroom management as part of paid employment. In some ECE RA programs, this may be two individuals, and in other ECE RA programs these roles are combined. Therefore, this may be one relationship or two. Either way, a good match is critical for apprentice success.

Steps for Successful Pairing and Matching



Use these strategies to ensure a successful match between individual mentors/journeyworkers and apprentices:

- **Identify apprentice needs**
Assess each apprentice's goals, learning style, and developmental needs to identify what they will need from a journeyworker/mentor.
- **Know mentors and journeyworkers**
Assess potential mentors/journeyworkers to identify the strengths they will bring to the mentoring relationship.
- **Make a match based on the apprentice's needs and the mentor's/journeyworker's strengths**
Pairing an apprentice with the right mentor/journeyworker creates a complementary and supportive relationship that encourages the apprentice to achieve their career aspirations.
- **Establish clear expectations for how the pair will work together**
Set up and document meeting schedules, ways to communicate, and other important agreements between the mentor/journeyworker and apprentice.
- **Continually ensure that the relationships and agreements are working for both parties**
Use periodic checkpoints to assess the match and provide support or make adjustments as needed.

Qualities to Look for in Mentors/Journeyworkers



- Patience, flexibility, and openness to a collaborative relationship
- Strong interpersonal skills
- Positive role model committed to ECE ethics and values
- Good communication skills — listens actively, provides constructive feedback, and encourages open dialogue
- Commitment to personal growth and nurturing the apprentice's development

Benefits of a Strong Pairing and Match



- **Skill Mastery:** Apprentices learn best from mentors/journeyworkers who meet them where they are and give them confidence to grow their competence.
- **Career Guidance:** Mentors/journeyworkers who are positive and knowledgeable role models inspire individual apprentices' apprentices' aspirations.
- **Holistic Development:** Emotional support and technical training ensures that apprentices grow professionally and personally.

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Find more information about how the Early Childhood Workforce Connector can help you.

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