



ONTARIO NURSES' ASSOCIATION

The Mentor Toolkit

Revised January 2024

ONA is the union representing 68,000 registered nurses and allied health professionals and more than 18,000 nursing students providing care in hospitals, long-term care facilities, public health, the community, clinics and industry.

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Definition of Mentoring

The Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) defines "Mentoring" as a supportive relationship between two people that contributes to the growth and development, from grassroots member to the leader and advocate that they aspire to be.

To further elaborate, "mentoring" in your union role, can be a formal or informal relationship that enhances insight, decision-making, planning and performance for leadership development, to fellow executive members, Bargaining Unit leaders and members, and for succession planning. The connection that develops between the mentor and mentee assists the mentee in reflecting on their own experiences, to make informed decisions and act upon the generated ideas.

The purpose of mentoring is to promote skill development, performance improvement and becoming the leader they want to be. Mentoring is about growth and development, and teaching, where both parties involved learn and benefit from the experience.

The relationship is interactive and cooperative, with regular, meaningful communication between the mentor and mentee that facilitates goal setting, knowledge transfer and skill acquisition. The mentor influences the personal and professional growth of the mentee leading to improved problem solving and decision making.

Mentoring promotes a mutually beneficial connection capable of enduring a specified time or a lifetime.

ONA VISION, MISSION, and VALUES Statement

Our Vision

Our vision is empowered members taking collective action for safe, equitable workplaces and high-quality health care for all Ontarians.

Our Mission

Our mission at ONA is to defend the rights of and advocate for nurses and health-care professionals who care for the health of Ontarians.

Our Values

Strength and Unity

Determined and together, we harness our collective power and achieve our shared goals.

Integrity and Professionalism

We are committed to doing what is right, advancing the interests of our members, and advocating for patients, residents and clients.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

We embrace our differences and seek to create an organization, a health-care system and a society where all people are valued, included and respected.

Linking to ONA's Strategic Plan

ONA's Mentoring toolkit aligns with ONA's Strategic Plan priorities and actions, including Priority B. Members Supported and Priority C. Stronger Bargaining Units, specifically actions meet the needs and requirements of ONA's Strategic Plan, Priorities #3, #5, #8, and #10.

Priority A: Members Informed – Empowering you with the information members value.

Action #3 – Provide Local executives and Bargaining Unit reps with tools and tactics for communicating valuable information to members.

Action #5 – Work towards all new members get a great orientation to the information they need through their Bargaining Unit.

Priority B: Members Supported – Supporting you to achieve better work conditions.

Action #8 – Ensure new Bargaining Unit Presidents are given high-quality onboarding and intensive needs-based support so their members receive consistent service during leadership transitions.

Priority C: Stronger Bargaining Units – Equipping your Bargaining Unit representatives to support and work with you:

Action #10 – Assess our educational offerings and use lessons learned to strengthen foundational learning pathways for Local executives and Bargaining Unit representatives, in order to help build high-performing Bargaining Units and Locals.

The 2024 Mentor Tool Kit provides our leaders with the tools to assist any member who is elected to any Bargaining Unit position to meet their competencies and accountabilities of their role. It provides leaders with a step-

by-step guide to initiate and complete a mentorship plan with elected leaders in their role. The tool kit has sample documents and refers to key ONA competencies and accountabilities each leader needs to acquire in their role. The mentorship relationship will allow the new leader to identify gaps in knowledge, skills and practice, and devise a plan to close those gaps. The Learning Pathways will help guide the new leader to appropriate educational offerings, so that they may address their learning needs and achieve their goals.

Key Elements of a Mentoring Relationship

Each mentoring relationship goes through phases. The stages of the mentoring relationship are:

Phase One – Establish the purpose and expected benefits of their mentoring journey.

- Get to know each other by sharing personal experiences and information.
- Building a relationship.
- Identify roles, expectations, and goals.

In this phase, it is essential to establish the purpose and expected benefits of their mentoring relationship. It will identify how the mentor and mentee wish to proceed in their mentoring relationship.

Phase Two – Set the ground rules for effective communication and measures of success for the relationship by:

- Identifying the required knowledge, skills and abilities for the role, utilizing the ONA Guide to Leadership Competencies and Accountabilities document.
- Identifying specific gaps in knowledge and skill, related to the appropriate executive position.
- Collaboratively develop a learning plan. Proceed to set SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound) goals. Identify the strategies or actions required to achieve the established goals.

S.M.A.R.T. Goals

Specific

State exactly what you want to achieve. Can you break a larger task down into smaller items?

Measurable

Establish clear definitions to help you measure if you're reaching your goal.

Action-Oriented

Describe your goals using action verbs and outline the exact steps you will take to accomplish your goal.

Realistic

Give yourself the opportunity to succeed by setting goals you'll actually be able to accomplish. Be sure to consider obstacles you may need to overcome.

Time-Bound

How much time do you have to complete the task? Decide exactly when you'll start and finish your goal. (Jakubick (2016a) SMART Goals)

- Utilize the tools included in this document and the Learning Pathways document to guide your plan.
- Establish a plan to meet to review and revise goals on a regular basis, reflecting on what has been achieved, any necessary changes or new strategies to complete your goals.
- Once you have achieved your learning goals, evaluate what you have accomplished, and what next steps are required to be competent in that skill or knowledge. Continue to work on those goals where gaps in knowledge or skills still remain.
- Actively listen, give and receive feedback.
- Continue to meet as frequently as required.

Phase Three – Conclude the mentoring relationship when:

- The mentee and mentor believe the goals and needs have been met.
Note: Mentorship relationships often continue beyond the mentoring period.

The Mentoring Conversation

The mentoring conversation aims at facilitating self-development. It is based on four questions:

1. Where am I now? Identify the current skills, knowledge and experience you bring to this elected position. The mentor facilitates this first reflection and exploration of needs/options with the mentee.
2. Where do I want to be? Identify the skills, knowledge and experience required to have for this elected position. The mentor assists the mentee with goal setting and formulating practical strategies to meet those goals.
3. How do I get there? Using the Learning Plan, the ONA Learning pathways, and the Competencies Checklist for the elected position, identify gaps in practice, goals, or objectives to meet, and a deadline to meet those goals. The mentor encourages and supports the mentee as they implement the plan. The mentor assists the mentee with problem-solving and helps with the decision-making process in any situation. The mentor equips the mentee with tools to meet their goals.
4. How am I doing? Participate in ongoing self-reflection. Are you learning? Are you moving forward with your goals? Are there gaps? If so, what must you do to adjust your plan and goals?

Three considerations for an effective mentoring conversation:

- Be prepared.
- Listen actively.
- Address resistance.

The role of the mentor is to build rapport, ask questions, listen and elicit the mentee's understanding and knowledge transfer. The mentor needs to be skilled in leading the mentoring conversation.

The mentoring conversation invites the mentee to reflect on their own experience, a situation, issue or problem, gather information from various sources, sort through options and decide on a course of action; make a plan and implement it. Reviewing the results continues the learning cycle.

Mentoring relationships and conversations are not static; they are dynamic. They move and change because they are flexible and adapt to the person and the situation. Mentoring is about offering support – encouraging and validating the mentee and sometimes challenging them by providing a different perspective. The mentor uses Reflective Listening to summarize what was heard, check your understanding of what was said. And allow the mentee to clarify if there was a misinterpretation. The mentor does this with questions such as; “So what you are saying is...;” “What I am hearing is...;” “From your point of view...” (this is important because it implies to the mentee that there are other ways of seeing something, making them think of other possibilities.) Giving support to the mentee encourages and validates their ideas.

The mentor generates options and possibilities with the mentee. The mentor can use the question “Where do you want to be?” The mentor continues to use open-ended questions, minimal response, gentle probing and reflective listening.

The mentor encourages the mentee to share their decision-making process, creating an opportunity to give constructive feedback, impart knowledge and experience, make suggestions, and challenge assumptions with the mentee, generating new ideas that may be possible for them. It may also be a time to pause the conversation and have the mentee reflect and research other options and possibilities.

This would be the topic for the following conversation.

The mentee needs to establish their goals, actions, and plan. “How might you get there?” is the question to think about. This stage comes later in the mentorship relationship. There will be follow-up and feedback, and adjustment.

Questions such as “How are you feeling about your progress?” “What else do you need to do?” “How can I help?” “If the plan didn’t work, what was the challenge?” “If the mentee has not actioned, what was the barrier?” “How can that be addressed?” It is important to encourage the mentee to strive for improvement and reach the goals they have set for themselves.

Giving and Receiving Feedback

“Feedback is a response to a person’s activity with the purpose of helping them adjust to become more effective. Feedback comes in various forms, including evaluative (how you did and where you are), appreciative (how you are valued and recognized), and coaching (how you can improve).” (Conway, 2024).

We are continually receiving and giving feedback, both explicitly through oral and written language, and implicitly through gestures and tone of voice. It is important to distinguish feedback from evaluation. Feedback is a formative assessment tool that uses descriptive, constructive and non-judgmental language. Evaluation is a summative assessment tool that judges outcomes and allows for comparison against a standard of performance (University of Waterloo, 2024). Providing iterative feedback is preferable as this provides the recipient with the opportunity to improve before participating in the next activity and before a formal evaluation. Effective feedback is achieved by establishing a positive interpersonal relationship between the person(s) providing feedback and the recipient(s) as this creates an environment that fosters development (University of Waterloo, 2024).

Mentoring is a reciprocal relationship, and you may receive as well as give feedback. How you deliver feedback is as important as how you accept it. You must be sensitive, and honest when giving feedback. You must also deliver feedback in a non-threatening and encouraging manner, and ensure that the message is clearly stated, focusing on a behaviour or event that can be changed.

In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behaviour or incident (depending on the person's readiness to hear it, support available from others, etc.). It should be well planned out and in a private confidential space. Feedback is intended to be of value to the other person. You will want to ensure that clear understanding exists. One way of doing this is to ask your mentee to rephrase the feedback to see if it corresponds to what you had in mind.

Remember – Feedback is a way of giving help and serving as an opportunity for your mentee to learn how well their behaviour matches their intentions. Feedback is a means for establishing one's identity for answering "Who am I?" It must be given in an environment that is appropriate and where confidentiality can be maintained. Lastly and most importantly, remember it is a part of your role as a mentor to provide feedback.

When receiving feedback remember to be open and listen without interruption or objections, be willing to hear what is being said. Accept the feedback, recognize the value of what is being said, interact with the speaker asking for clarification when needed. Listen actively to be able to understand the meaning of the feedback, be genuinely interested in getting feedback, reflecting on how this will be helpful going forward.

Quick mentorship tips:

Here are some tips for ensuring a successful mentor-mentee partnership:

- **Set expectations up front.** These should include goals of the relationship.
- **Provide honest feedback** (both positive and constructive) to the mentee. Point out what is working and areas for improvement.
- **Recognize mentee accomplishments.** Everyone likes to hear when they do well.
- **Hold mentees accountable.** If they did not meet a previously established goal, discuss why and how to best move forward.
- **Be open to feedback about yourself from the mentee.** This can help you improve your mentorship skills.
- **Allow the mentee to solve their problems if possible.** This facilitates learning.
- **Be willing to make a change** if the partnership is not working.
- **Be a role model.** Don't expect to see positive behaviors in your mentee if you aren't role modeling them yourself.
- **Listen.** This is probably the hardest tip to follow but is also probably the most important. Listening helps ensure mentees feel they are being heard and enables you to provide effective support.

(Saver, 2024) pdf

REASON FOR MENTORSHIP/LEARNING PLAN (INCLUDE CONTEXT):

STRENGTHS: Weaknesses, Opportunities and Risks

Objectives:

Timeframe:

Mentor:

Knowledge to Gain Skills/Build Attitudes to Develop: (What must I acquire/improve?)	Development Activities: (How will I actually gain/build/develop these?)	Evidence of Achievement (How will I know I did it?)	Resources: (What or who [e.g., potential mentors] might help me in my development?)	Target Completion Date: (When will I be there? Include interim completion date for Reassessment)

What barriers or risks do you foresee, At work? At home?	What actions can minimize the impact of each barrier (what, how, who, when)? How often should I meet with my mentor? How will I measure success? What is the timeframe of this relationship

- You must take on accountability for your development as it is your own responsibility.
- Seek regular feedback from your mentor, be open and receptive.
- Be proactive!
- Initiate opportunities to grow.
- Be authentic – be optimistic – persevere!!

Signatures:

Mentor: _____ Date: _____

Mentee: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Self-Reflection WORKSHEET

Week/Month: _____

STEP 1: Identify at least one positive achievement towards your learning goals that happened in the past week/month.

STEP 2: Identify what existing skills enhanced your development.

STEP 3: Answer the following questions:

Identify one skill/behaviour you want to develop further?

What support(s) do I need to achieve the above goal?

What could I have done differently this week/month to assist in achieving the goals from my learning plan?

What feedback regarding my communication/interpersonal skills was most helpful this week?

How will I integrate this new skill into practice?

Evaluate the change.

Other comments:

Mentor Comments:

Mentee Signature: _____

Date: _____

Mentor Signature: _____

Date: _____

References

1. Conway, C. (2024). What is Feedback? Retrieved from <https://cameronconaway.com/transcripts/what-is-feedback/>
2. Jakubik, L. D., Eliades, A. B., Weese, M. M., & Huth, J. J. (2016a). Leadership Series: “How To” for Mentoring. Mentoring Practice and Mentoring Benefit 2: Mapping the Future and Career Optimism - An Overview and Application to Practice Using Mentoring Activities. *Pediatric Nursing*, 42(3), 145–146.
3. Saver, C. (2024). Essential Tips for Mentoring New Nurses. *Pelican News*, 80(1), 18–19.
4. University of Waterloo (2024). Receiving and Giving Effective Feedback. Retrieved from <https://uwaterloo.ca/centre-for-teaching-excellence/catalogs/tip-sheets/receiving-and-giving-effective-feedback/>

Links to the ONA Website

[ONA_GuidetoLeadershipCompetenciesAndAccountabilities.pdf](#)

[2024-Learning-Pathways-20231215.pdf \(ona.org\)](#)