

IOWA ACTIVITIES DIRECTOR MENTOR LEADERSHIP Mentor Best Practices

1. Establish Clear Expectations

Start by discussing goals, communication styles, and what success looks like for both mentor and mentee.

2. Be Goal-Oriented

Help your mentee set SMART goals (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound), and keep the mentoring process focused..

3. Be Consistent and Reliable

Show up when you say you will. Reliability builds trust.

4. Practice Active Listening

Let them talk freely without interruption.

5. Ask Thoughtful Questions

Encourage critical thinking and self-reflection by asking open-ended, guiding questions.

6. Share, Don't Dictate

Offer advice and share your experiences, but avoid telling them exactly what to do. Let them make their own decisions.

7. Foster Independence

The goal is to empower your mentee, not to make them reliant on you. Provide the tools and confidence to grow.

8. Stay Updated in Your Field

Mentorship is more powerful when you are offering current and relevant knowledge and skills.

9. Build Trust and Confidentiality

Make your mentee feel safe to share by keeping your conversations confidential and judgment-free.

10. Provide Constructive Feedback

Be honest but kind. Frame feedback as an opportunity for growth, not as criticism.

11. Lead by Example

Model the professional behavior, attitude, and work ethic you hope your mentee will develop.

12. Be Patient and Supportive

Growth takes time. Support your mentee through challenges and trials.

13. Encourage Two-Way Feedback

Invite feedback on your mentoring style and be open to adjusting.

14. Respect their Background

Value their experiences, culture, perspective, and uniqueness.

15. Be a Connector

Introduce your mentee to other professionals or opportunities that align with their goals.

16. Stay Curious and Open-Minded

You can learn a lot from your mentee too—mentoring is a two-way street.

17. Respect Boundaries

Be mindful of personal space and time. Mentoring should enhance—not overwhelm—their life.

18. Celebrate Wins

No matter how small, recognize progress and achievements to build confidence and motivation.

19. Schedule Regular Check-Ins

Consistency in communication strengthens the relationship and keeps momentum.

20. Reflect on the Journey

Periodically review progress, lessons learned, and how the relationship is evolving.
