



All mentoring relationships will eventually close. Many times, closure is a celebration for matches who have successfully completed the program or reached the maximum age limit. Often times, these matches will continue their relationship outside of the mentoring program with the parent's permission. Unfortunately, matches can sometimes close prematurely, and this can put a great strain on mentors and youth.

Mentoring professionals who attended *Matching, Monitoring and Match Closure Workshops* sponsored by Mentor Michigan in partnership with MSU Extension generated ideas to assist mentoring professionals in facilitating match closure, positive or unexpected, in a way that best supports youth and mentors. This publication lists four questions mentoring professionals attending the workshops were asked, followed by their responses.

Match Closure: Tips for Facilitating the Closure Process

Why do matches end prematurely?

Issues related to the program or process

- They were not a good fit.
- They do not like each other.
- The match was too rushed. Consequently all parties were not properly prepared, causing the match to not work out.
- The match did not have sufficient monitoring.
- Sometimes the program loses funding, forcing the match to discontinue.

Issues related to life circumstances

- The mentor or mentee's family moves away unexpectedly.
- The mentor loses his or her job and must end match due to financial situation.
- The mentor finds a new job that causes a change in the work schedule that does not work with the mentee's schedule.
- The mentee is sent to juvenile detention, foster care, or residential program that moves the youth too far away to continue with the current mentor.

Program initiated closure

- The mentor commits a criminal act.
- There is a repeated refusal on the part of the youth, mentor or parent to follow program rules.



- There is a concern regarding boundaries of one or more parties.

Mentor initiated closure

- The mentor is not comfortable going to the child's neighborhood
- The mentor is not feeling valued
- The mentor is not engaged with the program.
- The mentor is uncomfortable around the mentee's family.
- Peer mentors become too involved with extracurricular activities to maintain their commitment.
- The mentor ends the match as soon as their school or community service commitment is complete.
- The mentor believes the mentee does not really need a mentor.
- The mentee is "too hard to handle".
- The relationship or program did not meet mentor's expectations.

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- The mentee or parent did not respect the mentor's boundaries.
- The mentor and mentee are not compatible.

Youth initiated closure

- The older mentee feels her or she has outgrown their mentor.
- The youth did not really want a mentor but was mandated to do so.
- The relationship or program did not meet expectations.
- Mentor and mentee are not compatible.

Parent initiated closure

- Issues arise between the mentor and parent.
- There are communication problems.
- The relationship or program did not meet parents' expectations.
- Mentor displayed inappropriate boundaries.
- The parent feels threatened by the relationship.
- A parent returns and no longer sees the need for a mentor



How can you prevent match closure when issues arise?

- Provide proper training prior to matching youth with a mentor.
- Talk to the parents about the program and what mentoring involves, so they know what they can expect.
- Establish matching criteria and follow criteria when making matches.
- Utilize contracts that are signed by all parties, i.e. youth, parents, and mentor at the beginning of the match and revisit the contract periodically to assure goals and conditions are being met.
- Be consistent in monitoring the match by communicating regularly with mentor, youth and parents.
- It is good to meet with the matches together to see how they get along and ask you questions they may have. Do not rely solely on the phone or Email to communicate.
- Let your matches know you are there to support them.
- Look for "red flags" and address them right away.
- Notice pauses in conversation between matches and the parents. Where did that occur and who was not contributing. You might want to follow up with that person privately if he or she is uncomfortable with commenting around those involved.
- Do not procrastinate when issues arise.
- Schedule a meeting with involved parties when conflicts arise and actively listen to all sides, using conflict management skills to resolve disagreements.
- Sometimes the resolution will be to agree to disagree. That is okay.
- Provide ongoing training on topics that will support relationships.
- Help matches brainstorm when there are roadblocks.
- Celebrate your matches by doing something special to recognize their commitment. This will help to keep motivation and morale high.

How do you support positive match closure?

- List closure as one of the match goals and celebrate when the goal is reached.
- Provide your mentors with closure tool kits. Include:
 - ▶ A questionnaire that can be completed together to facilitate reflection.
 - ▶ Give the mentee stamped, addressed envelopes so he or she can write the mentor letters.
 - ▶ A disposable camera, picture frame or scrapbook.

Ideas for a final celebration.

- Prepare before closure happens by letting everyone know what to expect.
 - ▶ Tell the parent and ask them how they think their child will react.
 - ▶ Work with both the mentor and parent to ensure they understand the closure plan.
 - ▶ Taper off visits over time instead of abruptly stopping visits all together.
- Communicate the reason for closure clearly to ensure everyone understands.
- Celebrate the positive growth of the

relationship and the completion of goals. Here are some ideas:

- ▶ Invite other matches and parents if appropriate.
- ▶ For school-based programs you could hold a group closure/ graduation celebration.
- ▶ Host a dinner with the match and family and reminisce.
- Facilitate reflection: remember and recall.
 - ▶ Provide the mentor and mentee with photographs and other materials to make a collage that reflects their time together.
- ▶ Ask them to think about where they started and where they are now in their relationship.
- Provide an opportunity for all parties to evaluate the:
 - ▶ Program
 - ▶ Match
 - ▶ Match progress
- Thank everyone for their participation.
- Help the match decide if there is any post-match communication.

- Discuss with mentor future involvement in the program, i.e. new mentee.
- Provide assistance in transferring of match to new program if applicable.
- Recognize with awards, certificates or newsletter stories.
- Share their story with others through:
 - ▶ Newsletters
 - ▶ Awards
 - ▶ Press releases

How can you support unplanned or negative closure situations?

- Be available and return calls and emails promptly.
- Get all information from all involved parties.
 - ▶ Listen and ask questions for clarity.
- Facilitate a closure meeting for all parties.
 - ▶ Encourage honest and clear communication.
 - ▶ When possible, be as positive and encouraging as possible.
 - ▶ Help all parties feel successful by highlighting what went well in the match.
- ▶ Reassure the mentor and youth this is not a failure but a learning experience for all involved.
- When a mentor must close the match due to circumstances beyond control:
 - ▶ Explain the situation to the youth and have a conversation concerning how life can change for everyone.
 - ▶ Have another mentor in line for the mentee if possible or appropriate.
- Be open and answer questions.
- Thank and reassure them they did all they could.
- Ask if they would like to try again and be rematched.
- Offer volunteer options within the program in another role.



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