



DISA

Mentoring Program Handbook

Developed by:
Defense Information Systems Agency
Manpower, Personnel, and Security Directorate
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DISA MENTORING HANDBOOK

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Preface

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a “map” to guide you on the road to successful mentoring--a road that is becoming far more traveled. Mentoring is not a new concept; in fact, mentoring existed in ancient Greece. It is only that the road has been repaved with new ideas and styles that require a directional tool (i.e., map) for a successful journey.

This handbook will guide you through the mentoring process--what it means to be a mentor, the roles and responsibilities during your tutelage, and the different styles that you can adopt to meet the unique demands of a mentoring relationship. The mentor-associate relationship is charted from beginning to end by tips on how to identify an associate, cultivate the relationship, and avoid “obstacles” that can detour a mentor-associate relationship. Finally, this handbook outlines the positive effects of traveling this road--effects that are shared by the mentor, the associate, and the organization.

In fact, it is the positive effects of mentoring that have prompted DISA to implement mentoring, as a proactive approach, “to provide career guidance and role models for employees.” This handbook supports this approach by providing the information you need to be a successful mentor.

This handbook is a job aid that contains comprehensive information on mentoring, with tips, suggestions, and examples to supplement this information. It is recommended that you read all sections of the handbook at least once. Whether you are a mentor-to-be who stands at the crossroads of mentoring, or an experienced mentor who is miles down the road, there is information to be learned. Once you have read the material, refer to the handbook whenever necessary.

Part I - Introduction

Introduction. DISA established the DISA-wide Mentoring Program as part of an ongoing Agency commitment to the continuous personal and professional improvement of our civilian and military workforce. The Mentoring Program is to provide on-going interaction between employees and individuals whose experience, knowledge, and interest can foster personal and professional development.

Objectives. The objectives of the mentoring program are:

- To develop the associate's leadership skills and technical expertise.
- To provide positive and effective support in developing the associate into a more self-confident, knowledgeable, and respected employee who is challenged, motivated, and making significant contributions to DISA's mission.
- To develop the associate's networking abilities within the organization and the Agency.
- To foster a greater sense of common purpose, teamwork and Agency identity within the DISA workforce.

Eligibility. The program is open to all DISA civilian and military personnel worldwide. Field activity employees are especially encouraged to participate.

Policy. Consistent with federal and DoD policies, the Mentoring Program emphasizes the systematic identification and development of employees who desire to assume broader technical/functional and managerial responsibilities within DISA.

Participants who transfer from one organization to another will be recorded in the gaining organization. Participants are responsible for coordinating the transfer of their files to the gaining organization.

The provisions of the Privacy Act of 1974 must be followed throughout this program. The maintenance of a record system for the Mentoring Program is authorized by Title 5, USC 4103, 4115 and 4118, and by Executive Order 3957. The following requirements must be strictly adhered to:

The confidentiality of personal information will be protected. Only authorized officials involved in the Mentoring Program implementation, administration, or oversight will have access to individual personnel records without the written authorization of the participants concerned.

Individual Mentoring Program records will be destroyed two years after a participant leaves the program.

Employees are to be informed of the authority for solicitation of any personal information, the principal purposes for which the information is needed, the routine uses to be made of the information, the voluntary nature of the information, and the consequences of not providing the information.

Period of Mentorship. Ideally, when personal chemistry is right, a mentor-associate relationship can last throughout a person's entire professional career. Initially, the period of mentorship in the DISA-wide Mentoring Program will be for two-years. At the end of the first year, the mentor-associate relationship will be assessed and changes made if necessary. Situations may arise that require the mentor-associate relationship to be terminated prior to the end of the mentorship period. In such cases, attempts will be made to find the associate a new mentor. There is no guarantee, expressed or implied, of promotion upon completion of this program.

Withdrawal. Voluntary and involuntary withdrawal from the Mentoring Program should be requested in writing. Participants requesting withdrawal from the program must provide a written explanatory request approved by their supervisor and mentor to MPS. Involuntary withdrawal of a program participant by their management must be requested in writing. Approval will be received from the supervisor and mentor. Written notification will be sent to the participant.

Roles and Responsibilities. The office of primary responsibility for the Mentoring Program is the Training and Visual Information Services Division (MPS5) within the Manpower, Personnel, and Security (MPS) Directorate. The roles and responsibilities of MPS5, the mentor, and the associate follow:

1. **Training and Visual Information Services Division (MPS5).** MPS5 is responsible for central management of the program DISA-wide. MPS5 will:
 - Promulgate policies, procedures, and forms.
 - Provide guidance on program administration.
 - Prepare and announce the program.
 - Issue notification letters of selection to applicants through the training coordinator.
 - Provide initial orientation information, guidance, and assistance to Mentoring Program associates, mentors, supervisors, and management officials as required.
 - Collect program data annually, evaluate the program's effectiveness, and recommend necessary changes to the Human Resources Steering Council (HRSC) for concurrence.
2. **Mentor.** The main responsibility of the mentor is to remain in close contact with his/her assigned associate and to provide continued support throughout the 2-year period.

During the period of mentorship, each mentor is expected to fulfill the following responsibilities:

Upon formalization of the Mentor-Associate relationship...

- Utilize available mentoring tools to become familiar with the roles and responsibilities of a mentor.
- Meet with the associate to provide advice and assistance as soon as possible.
- The mentor may assist in developing the associate's annual IDP. The plan should develop both technical and leadership skills and include provisions for:
 - o DISA in-house training
 - o DISA-sponsored external training
 - o On-the-job training
 - o Rotational assignments
 - o Mentor activities

Throughout the Mentor Program...

- Meet with the associate on a regular basis (recommended once a month) to check progress.
- Assist the associate in networking and becoming a visible player within DISA.
- Help the associate learn how to deal with various segments and levels of hierarchy within DISA.
- Attend training and other formal activities sponsored in support of the Mentor Program.

- Act as a source of information on DISA's mission, goals, and values.
- Serve as a role model and teach by example.
- Ensure that the associate seeks appropriate advice in times of crisis.
- Encourage professional behavior and build self-confidence in the associate.
- Provide advice on protocol and email etiquette.
- Provide guidance on proper communication, both verbal and written etiquette.

3. **Associate.** The associate is responsible for showing initiative and managing the relationship. The associate will:

- Fulfill the two-year commitment to the best of his/her ability.
- Communicate with his/her mentor and supervisor throughout the duration of the program.
- Meet with mentor on a regular basis.
- Seek out informal mentors throughout DISA.
- Work closely with the supervisor and the mentor.
- Actively assist the supervisor or mentor in locating challenging duties, projects, and programs.
- Assist the supervisor or mentor in negotiating and finalizing rotational assignment program arrangements (if appropriate) and learning goals.
- Coordinate with supervisor's approval a backup system to cover duties while on a rotational assignment.
- Provide feedback to mentor on how well he/she is meeting their needs.
- Fully engage in all learning experiences throughout the Mentor Program, including work assignments, projects, staff meetings, briefings, professional meetings, training courses, developmental assignments, and rotations.
- Develop leadership skills.

4. **Supervisor.** Supervisors are responsible for supporting the associate's commitment to the program. The supervisor will:

- Plan and assign the associate's work, projects, rotations, and other professional development activities.
- Guide and advise the associate on his/her career interests and skills, and evaluate his/her job performance to provide verbal feedback and constructive criticism on a regular basis.
- Attend training and other formal activities sponsored in support of the Mentor Program.
- Conduct annual performance appraisals.
- Remain readily available and supportive.
- Ensure rotational assignments (if appropriate) provide direct or indirect knowledge and skills that are applicable to the associate's job and the mission area of assignment.

When executing a rotational assignment, the supervisor may ask the mentor to...

- Assist in the selection and final approval of the rotational assignment.
- Coordinate dates and working arrangements with the rotational assignment supervisor.
- Brief the rotational assignment supervisor on the purpose of the Mentor Program, as well as the desired learning goals and expectations of the associate.
- Provide the rotational assignment supervisor with a copy of the associate's IDP.
- Coordinate time and attendance with the rotational assignment supervisor.
- Retain administrative functions. Coordinate with the rotational assignment supervisor for any needed administrative support.

Part II. Mentoring Program

Process

The mentoring process links an experienced person (mentor) with a less experienced person (associate) to help facilitate personal and professional growth in an individual by sharing the knowledge and insights that have been learned through the years. Mentoring is a strategy for comprehensive growth and development.

Characteristics of a Mentor. A mentor is one who is genuinely interested in people and has a desire to help others. A mentor is a listener, questioner, and advisor. While the mentor does not need to have all the answers the associate may seek, he/she should be skilled in directing the search for answers. Other characteristics of an effective mentor are:

- Social skills
- Communication skills
- Integrity
- Trust
- Respect
- Knowledge
- Passion
- Confidence in People
- Balance

Characteristics of an Associate.

- Sense of responsibility for your own growth.
- A sense of where you want your career to go.
- Willingness to take feedback constructively.
- Willingness to learn.
- Desire to make the organization more effective

How will this program benefit Associates?

- Direction for personal growth.
- Clarification regarding career goals and career growth.
- Reference for problem analysis.
- Feedback on growth progress.
- Source of growth information.

How will this program benefit Mentors?

- Modeling leadership principles they believe in.
- Passing on their knowledge and insights that have been learned through the years.
- Increasing their personal growth--“by teaching, you learn.”
- Having the opportunity to review previously learned management/organizational concepts.

What are the benefits to DISA?

- Improved communication.
- Improved leadership.

- Improved motivation and morale.
- Improved recruitment and retention.
- Improved workforce capability.
- Energized organizational culture.
- Improved organizational effectiveness.
- Mentors transfer their experiences and knowledge.
- Associates gain more job satisfaction.
- Open to all DISA Headquarters and Field employees.

Announcement. Official information regarding the program and the matching process will be disseminated to all DISA employees. Particular effort should be made to notify special emphasis groups and those employees who are geographically detached from their activities or on extended temporary duty assignments. MPS5 will offer informal briefings for interested employees and their supervisors.

Matching Process. Associates will take the initiative to select the mentor. Mentors and associates will develop a profile. Information about the mentor will be posted in a mentor directory on the DISA-wide Mentoring web site. The associate will select a mentor. After a match has been made, the mentor and associate will be notified by e-mail.

Mentoring Process. Planned mentoring focuses on the goals of the individual and the organization. This focus usually results in benefits to both mentoring partners and the organization. The mentoring process usually increases employee productivity, eliminates turnover, and reduces absenteeism. One important aspect to keep in mind is that communication works both ways. Mentoring is not a one-way street. The relationship must be a learning experience for both parties.

Mentors and associates should follow the process listed below:

- Remain readily available and supportive.
- Mentors and associates complete on-line profile.
- Associate selects mentor online.
- Mentor Program Manager may facilitate the match.
- Mentor and associate attend training (either face to face or on-line).
- Mentor and associate monitor the mentoring program to ensure compliance.
- Mentor Program Manager provides formal interaction meeting either face-to-face or on-line.
- The program is evaluated to determine the results, such as advantages, cost effectiveness, and difficulties.

Note: For more details, use the ongoing tools for mentors and associates and mentoring process checklist at the back of the handbook.

Initial Meeting. After the matching occurs, it is up to the associate to contact the mentor. The associate might also want to use the goal planning worksheet to help facilitate discussion with the mentor. A general rule is that the first meeting should occur as soon as possible. The associate and the mentor should discuss the goals that the associate would like to work toward. It is in the best interest of the associate to involve his/her supervisor in the development of goal planning.

Initial Mentor Meeting Procedures. The mentor and the associate should follow the procedures listed below:

- Discuss the terms of the partnership: date, time, place, etc. Discuss the approximate amount of time to be invested in both parties. Discuss ways of giving feedback. Develop a partnership plan.
- Review associate position description for duties. Discuss and identify any “extra” duties not listed in the position description.
- Review and discuss associate goals. The expectations need to be expressed in concrete terms. Specific goals and developmental activities should be discussed and documented.

- Identify specific roles of the mentor and the associate.
- Provide “To Do List” to associate for continuing discussion with the mentor and the associate’s immediate supervisor.

Administrative Requirements. The administrative requirements revolve around goal setting. A mentor will be most effective if he/she understands the professional goals of the associate. Career structure can be formalized by writing the long-term and short-term goals on a planning worksheet. The associate’s goals must be realistic and flexible. The associate’s goals should also coincide with DISA’s philosophy and culture. Once the developmental goals have been established, they can be organized in the following categories: career, social, and personal goals. Career goals are desires to advance one’s profession. To attain career goals, one must use his/her knowledge, skills, and abilities. To accomplish some career goals, employees must complete certain training and education requirements. Social goals are aspirations to meet other professionals to build a network of contacts. For instance, one associate might join a professional organization to meet other professionals in the same field. Personal goals are strong desires to improve one’s self. An associate might wish to concentrate on improving organizational skills so he/she could perform the job more effectively. Developmental goals should be adjusted.

One Essential Administrative Requirement.

- The mentor and the associate should not be in the same supervisory chain of command.

Two Optional Administrative Requirements

- Two-year outcomes (short- and long-term goals) (Plain bond or Planning worksheet)
- Two-year IDP (Optional) (HRD COMPASS Development Planner)

Tools for Mentors and Associates.

1. Online training will be provided for the mentors and associates on:
 - Roles and responsibilities of the mentor and associate
 - Communication skills
 - Writing skills
 - Assessment instruments
2. Mentors and associates may sign a mentoring contract or partnership form. This partnership defines the times, dates, and how often the partners will meet, as well as the expectations and obligations of each. Both participants sign the contract to bind the relationship.
3. Mentors and associates will be given sample mentoring logs that they can keep to record their mentoring experiences.
4. Associates can also create a personal vision and write a plan that will assist the mentor in helping the associate develop personally and professionally.

Program Evaluation.

The Mentor Program Manager will make adjustments to the program as a result of the feedback obtained from the evaluations data. Quantitative data (e.g., number of program applicants, times mentor and associates interact) will be used as well as qualitative data (e.g., participants’ level of satisfaction with the training). Two evaluation forms will be used. The first, “Midway Review,” is a formulative evaluation tool to collect information from mentors and associates and to make implied improvements halfway through their partnership. The second, “Final Review,” is an evaluation instrument to be completed by mentors and associates near the end of their formal relationship. Various methods of collecting the data will be used. Questionnaires and interviews will gather data. Also, observations from mentoring sessions and meetings will be used.

Review of Progress.

At a minimum, supervisors and mentors will review participant's progress semi-annually. Discussions with participants should focus on the developmental objectives and planned activities and training set out in the IDP.

A participant may be removed from the program by MPS in consultation with the organization, under the following circumstances:

- The participant leaves DISA or develops new career goals that would not be furthered by participation.
- The participant is unable to maintain a high level of professional performance; or
- The participant fails to make progress toward achieving program objectives.

Ongoing Tools For Mentors And Associates. Optional tools will be posted in the **DISA Mentoring Program** Web site at: <https://mps-cmis.ncr.disa.mil/lms/index.html>

Frequently Asked Questions: <https://mps-cmis.ncr.disa.mil/LMS/faq.html>

Additional Information can be found at:

<https://mps-cmis.ncr.disa.mil/LMS/mentoring/mentorhandbookdownload.html>

Appendices (Located on DISA Mentoring Program Web site:

- Appendix A - What is Mentoring?
- Appendix B - Mentor Directions and Roles
- Appendix C - Associate Roles
- Appendix D - Mentor and Associate Characteristics
- Appendix E - Development Objectives Experiences for Associates
- Appendix F - Types of Mentoring
- Appendix G - Mentoring Stages
- Appendix H - Mentoring Skills
- Appendix I - Essentials of a Mentoring Relationship
- Appendix J - Obstacles in a Mentoring Relationship
- Appendix K - Benefits of Mentoring
- Appendix L - Mentoring Process Checklist
- Appendix M - Sample Goal Setting Worksheet

DISA MENTORING PROGRAM TOOL FOR MENTORS AND ASSOCIATES

Leading
Change

Leading
People

Results
Driven

Business
Accumen

Building Coalitions/
Communication

CRITICAL SKILLS CHECKLIST FOR MENTORS

- **Listen actively:** Listen carefully first. Problem solve later.
- **Identify Goals and Current Reality:** Assist Associate to identify their personal vision and specific career goals. Identify what development is needed and specific assistance they need from you.
- **Build Trust:** Keep confidences shared by your Associate. Spend appropriate time together. Respect boundaries.
- **Be Encouraging:** Complement your Associate on accomplishments and actions. Point out positive traits in addition to their performance and accomplishments.
- **Be Inspiring:** Help them observe others who are inspiring. Challenge your Associate to improve.
- **Provide Corrective Feedback:** Give corrective feedback in private. Offer useful suggestions for any corrective actions.
- **Help Manage Risk:** Assist Associate to recognize risks involved in actions and projects. Make suggestions to help them avoid major mistakes in business, career, and financial judgment or actions.
- **Open Doors to Opportunity:** Give Associates assignments and opportunities that enable them to interact with important colleagues, customers, and others.

CRITICAL SKILLS CHECKLIST FOR ASSOCIATES

- **Acquire a Mentor:** In the spirit of career self-reliance, be very active in selecting and negotiating with a mentor who can help you succeed. Convey your specific needs and goals to your mentor. Initiate contact for your first meeting.
- **Learn Quickly:** Apply your knowledge and skills presented to you, and be ready to tell your mentor how it was applied. Integrate new things you learn into your own conceptual framework for problem solving.
- **Show Initiative:** Pursue useful resources on your own. Go beyond what your mentor suggests, i.e., take their ideas and show creative or ambitious ways of using them.
- **Follow Through:** Keep all agreements made with your mentors. Complete agreed-upon tasks on time.
- **Manage the Relationship:** Stay up to date with your mentor on issues between you, goals to reach, satisfaction with your meeting schedules, etc. Analyze the current status of your mentoring relationship and determine where to go next.



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