

# Mentor Coach Guidebook

## Kansas Early Years Mentor Coaching

### Kansas Early Years Mission

The Kansas Early Years' mission is to guide early intervention practitioners in forming trusting partnerships with families to engage in evidence-based decision making in home and community settings. The outcomes include improved child development and enhanced quality of life for the entire family.



# Mentor Coach Guidebook

## Table of Contents

<b>GETTING STARTED</b>	<b>4</b>
<hr/>	
WELCOME TO EARLY YEARS AND MENTOR COACHING!	4
WHAT IS MENTOR COACHING?	4
WHO IS A MENTOR COACH?	4
WHAT RESOURCES ARE AVAILABLE FOR MENTOR COACHES TO USE?	5
SUGGESTIONS/GUIDANCE FOR CONDUCTING THE FIRST MENTOR COACHING MEETING	7
<b>MEETINGS</b>	<b>12</b>
<hr/>	
ONGOING MENTOR COACHING MEETINGS	12
RESOURCES TO SUPPORT MENTOR COACHING MEETING	13
TRAINING FOR EARLY YEARS MENTOR COACH	13
APPENDIX A: MENTOR COACH/EARLY YEARS LEARNER AGREEMENT	14
APPENDIX B: SELF-REFLECTION JOURNAL SAMPLE	15
APPENDIX C: MENTOR COACHING MEETING RECORD	16
REFERENCES	17

## **Getting Started**

### **Welcome to Early Years and Mentor Coaching!**

We are excited to welcome you to the Early Years team! Your participation as a Kansas Early Years mentor coach is a critical feature to the success of the learner(s) with which you will be working. Kansas Early Years supports the formation of trusting partnerships between practitioners and mentor coaches and between practitioners and families. Mentor coaching acts as a support for the practitioner but also as a model of a trusting partnership for practitioners to learn from as they move forward in their work with families.

### **What is Mentor Coaching?**

Mentor coaching is the reciprocal interaction mentor coaches and early interventionists use to reflect on and apply Kansas Early Years Content into everyday practice. We hope that as you participate in the process that you will immerse yourself in learning from one another, and that these interactions will be mutually beneficial, a reflection of a true partnership.

As learners progress through the online Kansas Early Years curriculum, mentor coaching is designed to create a supportive environment for learners to translate new knowledge and skills into their daily practice. In the mentor coaching component of Kansas Early Years, mentor coaches support learners to find potential solutions to challenging practice issues.

We have designed the mentor coaching component of Kansas Early Years to be based on the strengths of mentor coaches, local programs, and learners within programs. We realize that early intervention programs include practitioners that are on a continuum of experience and expertise in the application of partnership coaching within their programs. Some learners may only request a small amount of guidance from an experienced mentor such as being a sounding board or someone with whom to brainstorm when challenges arise. These learners already have a strong foundation in implementing evidence-based practices in early intervention. Other learners may need someone to join them on home visits or to observe the mentor coach modeling practices in home visitation opportunities. This may be their first experience in early intervention.

### **Who is a Mentor Coach?**

You may wonder – who is a mentor coach? A mentor coach is the partner who facilitates the application of Kansas Early Years content into practice within the learner’s work environment. Mentor coaches partner with learners to reflect on session content and to determine the action plan for application of what is learned from the content. This usually occurs during weekly mentor coaching meetings. Mentor coaches offer support that meets the individual strengths and needs of each learner.

## **What Resources are Available for Mentor Coaches to Use?**

Each meeting is guided by a set of forms that will be discussed in this guidebook and/or a set of instructions for mentor coaching found at the end of each session. The forms included in this guidebook are:

- Mentor Coach/Kansas Early Years Learner Agreement
- Self-Reflection Journal Sample
- Mentor Coaching Meeting Record

The forms assist mentor coaches and learners in monitoring progress.

Mentor coaches follow the Kansas Early Years Pathways (see Figure 1) as a framework for coaching with the learner. The Pathway is explained best in Module 2: Evidence-Based Decision- Making. We encourage you to review this module and reflect on how to incorporate the ideas and concepts reflected in the Pathway. In conversations with the learner, the mentor coach reflects an active use of the concepts in the Early Years Pathway bringing in empathetic communication, ethics and policy into conversations as well as an active use of evidence-based principles and practices.

Mentor coaches model the skills of good communication and actively focuses on listening to the learner. The mentor coach understands that respect for the ideas the learner brings to the table is critical, for what the learner knows and what they want to improve will guide each session.

## **A Mentor Coach is YOU!**

Figure 1: Kansas Early Years Pathway



## Suggestions/Guidance for Conducting the First Mentor Coaching Meeting

This first meeting is designed to set the stage for the all the collaborative work in which you and learners will engage together guided by the Kansas Early Years modules. This is your chance to welcome learners into the partnership and set the tone for the working together as partners. One of the tools that you will use in this first session, which will assist in setting the tone, is the Kansas Early Years Mentor Coach/Learner Agreement Form. We suggest you start the meeting with this agreement. The form is located in the Appendix A.

The form will guide you to discuss the following topics:

- Meet regularly and consistently as agreed upon (weekly is recommended)
- Be on time, organized, and prepared for each coaching session
- Demonstrate openness to learning from one another
- Hold in confidence information exchanged in this partnership
- Complete the self-reflection journal/video clip/observations checklist/self-reflection of strategies/evaluations of outcomes at the end of each session (Learner) \*Note materials vary by session and are presented at the end of every session.
- Jointly complete the weekly partnership action plan (keep as Mentor Coaching Meeting Record of process)
- Request/provide resources (i.e., emotional, informational, and instrumental) when needed
- Bring any issues to partner's attention immediately that interfere with the coaching relationship
- Respect each partner's individual strengths, needs, perspectives, learning styles, and cultural context

There is additional room on the form to add any other piece of information the two of you believe should characterize your partnership.

In this first meeting, we ask that you go over the coaching definitions that will guide the work during these meetings. We introduced these definitions to you earlier in this guidebook in the Welcome Section. Discuss the highlighted words and what that means to the two of you and for your future session.

- Mentor Coaching is the *reciprocal interaction* that mentor coaches and learners use to *reflect on and apply* Kansas Early Years content into *everyday practice*.

After the definition is shared, we suggest you discuss the purpose of your weekly meetings. The ultimate purpose is connecting knowledge to practice through applying of Kansas Early Years content to the learner's work context.

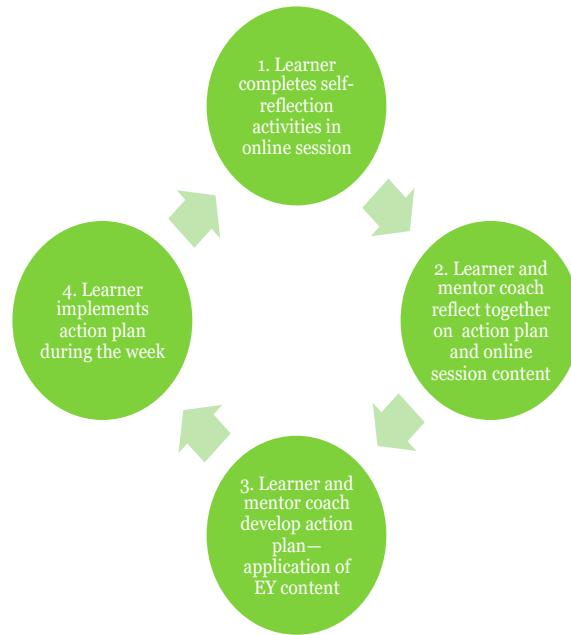
The following narrative/graphic (Figure 2) will assist you in explaining the purpose of your meetings and to begin to help the learner understand the flow of the meeting.

These steps involved in applying Kansas Early Years content to the work setting include the follow:

- Learner completes self-reflection activities and other activities in the online session(s) on which the meeting will focus.
- Learner and mentor coach reflect together on an action plan and online session(s) content.
- Learner and mentor coach develop an action plan to apply Early Years content.
- Learner implements action plan during the following week.

**Figure 2: Knowledge to Practice**

# Knowledge-to-Practice





At the end of every session, your learner will or already has seen a message like the following:

### **Mentor Coaching Activity**

You have now completed Session 1. You are on your way to learning critical information that will enable you to achieve the fullest benefit from your participation in Early Years.

After this session, you will meet with your Kansas Early Years mentor coach. This meeting will focus on translating what you learned into your everyday practice of making and implementing decisions in partnership with families.

In advance of the meeting, please review self-reflection journal. This journal will service as a conversation guide to help facilitate your discussions with your mentor coach.

The self-reflection journal, referred to in the above message is explained in more detail below in Step 3 of the Mentor Coach Meeting Record. This self-reflection journaling activity is designed to be a support in the development of conversation during weekly meetings and lead to the transformation of thought and knowledge into practice by the learner.

Other sessions will show a message similar to the one below:

### **Preparing for Your Mentor Coaching Meeting**

Please do the following:

- Send one video clip and the completed *Observation Checklist: Being Present*, the Self-Reflection of Strategies answers, and Evaluations of Outcomes answers to your mentor coach at a time mutually agreed upon by you and your mentor coach.
- Your coach's role is to review these materials in advance of the meeting.

At your mentor coaching meeting, you will reflect together about your progress with the communication strategies related to being present with families and on developing an action plan for continuing your professional development related to these strategies. Your mentor coach is your onsite support within the Kansas Early Years program. You can use this opportunity to ensure that you are implementing these communication strategies to the best of your ability.

Directions for completion of self-reflection journal are in Session 1. Directions for the video clip, observation checklist, and evaluation of outcomes are expanded upon starting in Session 2. Please see these sessions for complete details.

### **Session Flow/Mentor Coaching Meeting Record**

The next step will be to discuss the flow of every session. The Mentor Coaching Meeting Record will guide this conversation. This document is designed to be an artifact of the meeting and will serve as an account for decisions and activities that you as the mentor and the learner have agreed upon. This meeting record is located in the Appendix C.

The suggested flow of every meeting is as follows:

#### **1. Mentor Coaching Check-In**

This is the time to find out how the week went for both of you. Are there issues, challenges, or successes beyond the curriculum that the learner would like to discuss? This is a time when your role as the mentor may appear as you provide advice or guidance or exult the accomplishment of the learner. This is a time to support the learner as an individual in the partnership process.

#### **2. Mentor Coaching Action Plan Review**

This will begin after the first meeting. This is the time to review step 4 and 5 of this meeting record.

#### **3. Review of Self-Reflection Journal, Video Clip, Observation Checklist, Self-Reflection of Strategies, and/or Evaluation of Outcomes.**

The learner should complete mentor coaching materials as outlined in the mentor coaching section at the end of each session in advance of the mentor coaching session. These materials will assist in focusing conversation on the content of the corresponding session. Thus, the learner should be able to guide the discussions based on their responses to these materials. We encourage you to have questions of your own from the session handy so that you can discuss the questions in the event that the learner did not complete materials in advance of the session. Although we feel that the suggestions/activities included will help facilitate the transition of knowledge to application in the learner's context, we recognize that the use of the materials may not fit all learning styles. Therefore, if for some reason you and the learner choose not to use the materials provided, you are welcome to conduct meetings with more general guiding questions or to use these questions to supplement the Mentor Coaching materials.

Suggestions for each session include:

- How does what you learned in this lesson fit with what you already know and do in your work?
- How does what you learned in this lesson not fit with what you already know and do in your work?
- What are the pieces of this lesson that you would like to know more about?
- What would you specifically like to know or what type of information do you need?

#### **4. Mentor Coaching Action Plan Development**

The Mentor Coaching Action Plan simply sets in place an action plan with identified steps for next week to support the learner's application of the information presented in the Kansas Early Years session that is being worked on. So the singular question is: What do I want to act on for next week?

This may include an activity the learner wants to try with a family based on the Kansas Early Years materials paired with your joint conversation. It may include speaking to a peer or to you about what works for them or things they have tried. Identifying what was successful and what did work quite as well as hoped. These activities should be developed according to your knowledge and result from your conversation with the learner about what they need/want to learn and what type of support they need from you to do so. You will answer the following questions when completing the Mentor-Coaching Action Plan.

- Early Years Learner: What will I do differently/try next week?
- Early Years Mentor: What will I do to prepare for next session based on today's conversation?)

#### **5. Resources Needed (Emotional, Informational, and Instrumental)**

The need for resources will vary per your individual learner. We recommend you use the types of information outlined above, emotional, informational, and instrumental, as a guide to your conversations. The definitions of each type of support are as best explained are as follows:

- **Emotional support** refers to providing comfort to families in terms of addressing feelings and worries, as well as reducing stress
- **Informational support** is the provision of knowledge to answer questions and find successful solutions to problems.
- **Instrumental support** refers to assistance with completing practical tasks.

## **6. Joint Reflection:**

Joint reflection should occur to allow both the mentor coach and the learner to think about how the session went, what might be changed to improve the process and discussion and what should be changed prior to the next session. Here are sample questions that will support this process.

- How do I feel about what we have discussed this session?
- What can we do to improve our next session?

## **Meetings**

### **Ongoing Mentor Coaching Meetings**

At the end of this first meeting, advise your learner that every meeting will follow the flow of the Mentor Coach Meeting Record. Ask the learner what questions he/she may have at this point and allow time for them to clarify the process with you. Be sure to set a time for your next meeting.

In terms of support to you as the Mentor Coach as you conduct on-going Mentor Coach Meetings, we offer a resource section and options for training as outlined below. We realize that each of you come with a unique set of strengths and skills. Many of you will have extensive training in coaching as a means of professional development or other training that has prepared you for this role. We also realize that some of you will feel the need for more support in this role. We invite you to use the resources listed below as support and to take advantage of the Kansas Early Years COP, Webinars, Trainings and other resources.

One suggestion we would like to make that will best prepare you to support your learner in the Kansas Early Years Curriculum is for you to review the curriculum before your Mentor Coaching Meetings at least for your first Mentor Coaching Experience. We suggest that you read at least one week ahead of your learner so that you will be able to support their questions about the material covered in the Early Years session. This will assist you to be aware of the self-reflection activities that they have completed and understand the summarized versions of these self-reflection activities that should be recorded in the learner's self-reflection journal. If at any time you have questions about the curriculum, please contact your Kansas Early Years contact and we will be happy to support you.

## Resources to Support Mentor Coaching Meeting

Dathan Rush and M'Lisa Shelden have developed a number of resources related to coaching in early childhood. In the resources below is a book by these authors that will be of great support to anyone new to the process of coaching in early childhood. In addition to their book, they offer a number of articles and tools at their website – <https://fipp.ncdhhs.gov/> Two tools we think might be especially helpful to you in your weekly meetings include the following:

- Rush, D.D., Shelden, M.L., & Raab, M. (2008, September). A framework for reflective questioning when using a coaching interaction style. *CASEtools*, 4(1). Located at: <https://fipp.ncdhhs.gov/publications-products/case-publications/casetools/> This article includes a matrix to help support the conversations between yourself and your learner. The reflective questioning matrix contained in this article is useful in helping the learner go deeper into issues with self-reflection.
- Rush, D.D., & Shelden, M.L. (2008, January). Tips and techniques for effective coaching interactions. *BriefCASE*, 1(2). Located at: <https://fipp.ncdhhs.gov/publications-products/case-publications/briefcase/> This article offers general tips that are useful to anyone using coaching as an interaction technique.

## Training for Early Years Mentor Coach

We hope to build a web of support for the Kansas Early Years Mentor Coach. We look forward to your information and feedback as we grow this component of Kansas Early Years. We will post information on Mentor Coach Resource Tab as it becomes available. The following types of support are currently planned:

- Kansas Early Years Mentor Coach Community of Practice: Early Years Mentor Coach Community of Practice. We hope that you are interested!
- Kansas Early Years Mentor Coach Webinars: Regular webinars to share information and answer questions. We hope to highlight updates on topics related to Early Years. Topics may include: Policy Concept Changes, New Evidence Based Practices, Tips that have worked for other mentor Coaches.
- Early Years Mentor Coach Summer Institute. This institute is a professional development opportunity for Kansas Early Years Mentor Coaches from across the country. This is a chance to learn the research behind the use of coaching strategies for individuals at a variety of tiers of support needs. This is a chance to share ideas and learn new information.

We hope that you will become an active member of our Kansas Early Years Mentor Coach Community! We value each of you as a partner in the work of the Early Years! Thank you so much for your contributions to quality services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. We look forward to working with you! Good luck on your Mentor Coaching activities. Please keep us informed of your progress!

# Appendix A: Mentor Coach/Early Years Learner Agreement

Kansas Early Years

## Mentor Coach/ Learner Agreement

In this Mentor Coach/Learner Partnership, I agree to:

- Meet regularly and consistently as agreed upon (weekly is recommended)
- Be on time, organized, and prepared for each coaching session
- Demonstrate openness to learn from one another
- Hold in confidence information exchanged in this partnership
- Complete the self-reflection journal/video clip/observations checklist/self-reflection of strategies/evaluations of outcomes at the end of each session (Learner) \*Note materials vary by session and are presented at the end of every session.
- Jointly complete the weekly partnership action plan (keep as Mentor Coaching Meeting Record of process)
- Request/provide resources (i.e., emotional, informational, and instrumental) when needed
- Bring any issues to partner's attention immediately that interfere with the coaching relationship
- Respect each partner's individual strengths, needs, perspectives, learning styles, and cultural context
- Other issues we choose to add:

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I agree to participate as the learner in partnership with (mentor coach name) \_\_\_\_\_ while I complete the Kansas Early Years Curriculum.

Learner Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

I agree to participate as the mentor coach in partnership with (learner name) \_\_\_\_\_ during her/his completion of the Kansas Early Years curriculum.

Mentor Coach Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B: Self-Reflection Journal Sample**

### **Session 1**

#### **Instructions:**

The questions listed below are samples of questions you might write down and bring to your mentor coaching session. These questions derive from the self-reflection questions you completed in the online session. You and your mentor coach will engage in this type of conversation during your mentor coach meeting.

We have also included a place for you to begin to plan how you will “take action,” applying your self-reflection activities on the content to application in practice within your Mentor Coaching Action Plan.

#### **Conversation Topics:**

1. Discuss the impact Micah’s story had to your core beliefs about the potential of people with intellectual disability.
2. Discuss how your core beliefs were initially formed about the potential of people with an intellectual disability. Did you find that your core beliefs were in need of updating?
3. Discuss what Micah’s mother, Janice, had to share. What did Janice say that may have transformed your thinking about family life and disability?
4. What did Janice share that you might share with other families or your colleagues?
5. What other topics would you like to discuss from this session?

#### **Mentor Coaching Action Planning:**

What might you do within your practice next week that would support you to apply what you learned in this session to your practice?

## Appendix C: Mentor Coaching Meeting Record

1. Mentor Coaching Check-In
2. Mentor Coaching Action Plan Review
3. Review of self-reflection journal/video clip/observation checklist/self-reflection of strategies/evaluation of outcomes.
4. Mentor Coaching Action Plan Development:  

Action Plan Steps for next week (What do I want to act on for next week?)

  - a. Kansas Early Years Learner: What will I do differently/try next week?
  - b. Kansas Early Years Mentor Coach: What will I do to prepare for our next session based on today's conversation?
5. Resources Needed (Emotional, informational, and instrumental)
6. Joint Reflection:
  - a. How do I feel about what we have discussed this session?
  - b. What can we do to improve our next session?



## References

### Resources specific to coaching:

McWilliams, R.A. (2010). *Working with families of young children with special needs*. New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Rush, D.D., & Shelden M.L. (2011). *The early childhood coaching handbook*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co., Inc.

### Web sites:

Coaching Practices CASEcollections: <https://fipp.ncdhhs.gov/>

Instructional Coaching: Kansas Coaching Project: <http://www.instructionalcoach.org/>

### Additional references:

Colorado Coaching Consortium (2009, March). *Coaching competencies for Colorado early childhood education*. Author. Retrieved from <http://coloradoofficeofprofessionaldevelopment.org/index.cfm?PID=1332&ID=5454,20143,0>

Snyder, P., Hemmeter, M.L., & Fox, L. (2011, May). *Coaching to support fidelity of implementation of evidence-based practices in inclusive early childhood settings*. Presentation at the 2011 International Society on Early Intervention Conference. New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.challengingbehavior.org>

Weatherston, D. & Loftus, K. (2010). *Infant Mental Health Consultant Competencies*. Michigan Association for Infant Mental Health, Southgate, MI. Retrieved from [www.mi-aimh.org/](http://www.mi-aimh.org/)

Hemmeter, M.L., Snyder, P., Fox, L., & Algina, J. (2011, May). *Professional development related to the teaching pyramid model for addressing the social emotional development and challenging behavior of young children*. Presentation at the 2011 International Society on Early Intervention Conference, New York, NY. Retrieved from <http://www.challengingbehavior.org>

Knight, J. (2002). *The partnership learning fieldbook: The teacher-guided professional development series*. Kansas University Center for Research on Learning, Lawrence, KS.

Zepeda, S.J. (2010). *Professional development: What works, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition*. Eye On Education, Larchmont, NY.