



California Early Childhood MENTOR PROGRAM

A Mentor is . . .

The term "Mentor" or "Mentor Teacher" is used by the California Early Childhood Mentor Program to describe an experienced early childhood education teacher of infants, toddlers, preschoolers or school age children who has applied and been selected by her or his local Mentor Program. The Mentor Program, funded by the California Department of Education, Child Development Division, works with 95 community colleges across California. Those colleges, either individually, or working together in regional groupings, invite early childhood leaders from their community to serve on a Mentor Program Selection Committee. Each Committee uses the guidelines of the Mentor Program to review applications and select Mentors from a variety of child care settings, including publicly and privately funded centers and large family childcare programs.

A Mentor Does . . .

A Mentor accepts student teachers into her or his classroom for practicum experience. The Mentor provides a unique one-on-one learning relationship with the student teacher in the practical aspects of both working with young children and acting as a leader and advocate for the child care profession. The Mentor is responsible for guiding a student teacher during all of the laboratory hours required by the practicum course. That means being in the classroom whenever the student teacher is present and meeting with the student teacher weekly to answer the student teacher's questions and discuss Early Childhood Education concepts. Although a Mentor may work with several student teachers during a semester, only one student teacher may be present in the Mentor's classroom at a time.

What are the rewards?

The Mentor receives a stipend for each student placed in her or his classroom. The stipend amount depends on the number of hours the student teacher spends in the classroom as a requirement of her or his practicum course. Mentors also receive stipends for working with students after they have completed their practicum and for supporting ECE students in successfully completing their full course of study, regardless of course or subject. In addition to receiving stipends for working with students, Mentors are also supported for their professional development activities through a Mentor In-Service Training Component. In-Service Training has two elements. First, Mentors from all placement sites meet once a month in a seminar format. Mentor Seminars combine informal discussion and peer support with more formalized training in supervision strategies, leadership and advocacy skills. In addition to participating in monthly Mentor Seminars, Mentors engage in other professional activities, for example, speaking at ECE classes or workshops, giving interviews, testifying at legislative hearings, or making conference presentations. Mentors receive a stipend of up to \$500 for participation in In-Service Training.

How do I become a Mentor?

Step 1. Meet the minimum qualifications:

- * No fewer than two years of experience teaching in an ECE environment (experience need not be all in one setting)
 - * Current employment in an ECE site with no fewer than three hours per day, five days per week spent with the same group of children (for full time programs)
 - * Completion of a degree or certificate in Early Childhood Education, including at least one course in supervised student teaching or direct assessment
 - * Eligibility for the Master Teacher Level, or higher, of the California Child Development Permit Matrix
- * Completion of an Adult Supervision (Mentor Teacher) course •
- * Submission of an appropriate Environment Rating Scale (e.g., ECERS-R, ITERS-R) on your site or classroom in preparation to discuss with Selection Committee members.

There are no exceptions to these minimum standards.

Step 2. Apply to your local Mentor Program. To do so, contact your local Mentor Program Coordinator, request an application, and submit that application to the Coordinator.

Your completed application packet will include:

- * Application to Become a Mentor
- * Official transcripts of all Early Childhood or Child Development coursework
- * Three (3) letters of recommendation from Early Childhood professionals who can attest to the quality of your teaching and classroom supervision skills
- * One (1) letter of recommendation from a parent who can attest to the quality of your teaching and classroom supervision skills

Your written application, references, transcripts, Environment Rating Scale, and other supporting materials will be reviewed by the Coordinator and a team of two Selection Committee members. If these materials present you as a viable candidate for Mentor, you will proceed to Step 3.

Step 3. Cooperate in the scheduling of two Selection Committee members to visit your site and conduct an appropriate Environment Rating Scale (e.g., ECERS-R, ITERS-R) on your classroom.

Following Steps 1, 2 & 3, the local Selection Committee will meet to determine selection. Note that Selection Committees may establish priorities based on program needs, such as representation by programs of different types (family, corporate, Montessori, or publicly-funded child care, for example), need for bilingual Mentors, or need for Mentors in certain geographic areas.

Am I eligible to be a Mentor if I work in a campus lab school?

Yes, but there are restrictions. Lab teachers may not be Mentors if their job descriptions already include the supervision of student teachers. There is an exception to this rule in cases where hours of pre-existing supervision duties are blocked out (e.g., T-Th 9-12 or summer excluded), and student placements with the Mentor are outside this schedule. Also, given that one of the original missions of the Mentor Program was to reach out to the community beyond college lab school programs, a requirement for all programs is that no greater than 20% of Mentors may be campus lab school teachers.

Am I eligible to be a Mentor if I work with school-aged children in extended day care?

Yes, as long as all minimum qualifications are met and local training institutions are willing to place students in your site for their practicum experience. Public school kindergarten teachers, however, are not eligible to become Mentors in this program.

Can I be a Mentor if I am a Director?

Yes, as long as you are written into the schedule and actually spend a minimum of three hours per day, five days per week with the same group of children (for full time programs) in a teaching capacity.

Do I Need to Inform my Director when I apply to become a Mentor?

Yes. Your Director must sign your application form, indicating that s/he approves of your potential role of mentoring students in your classroom.

How Does my Program Benefit from my Role as a Mentor?

As a Mentor, you are provided with incentives that can increase not only your tenure at the worksite but the tenure of others by providing training options for staff at their worksite. In addition, you provide prestige to your childcare setting as a placement site for your local community college or ROP training program. Such recognition can be included at a parent's night, when you can present information on the specific quality details of your classroom set-up and teaching strategies. Your program director may also use your professional efforts as a Mentor to promote your program as a model in the community. By allowing you to become a Mentor, your director also gains a higher priority should she or he wish to apply to become a Director Mentor.

Working for better child care since 1988

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