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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION:

Mentoring is generally considered the act of helping one build his or her skills and self-sufficiency through trusting and supportive relationships. Mentoring relationships may be formal or informal.

All WFS MFIP Employment Services providers (“ES Providers”) are expected to incorporate a mentoring program (either in-house or referred to another agency) that includes resources such as community elders, faith-based organizations, other MFIP participants who exited the MFIP program, and business leaders.

Mentoring may be described as a personal/ professional developmental relationship in which a more experienced or more informed person, or multiple representatives from the community, helps to guide a less experienced person. It is about ongoing relationship of learning, dialogue, and challenge. Some communities of color (e.g. African American, American Indian, and Asian American), describe the act of mentoring as a responsibility for all members of the community. For example, if you as an American Indian have parented, then you should mentor young mothers, or if you as an African American have been successful with your career, then you are expected to share your educational and professional knowledge and experience with other, younger members of the community.

ES Providers offer a range of mentoring opportunities:

AIFC provides **mentoring services** through the “Mother’s Program” and “Our Children Are Sacred” programs, and men receive these services through the “Rise Up Original Men” program. The mentoring is provided through the sharing of traditions and spirituality, and through teachings passed from elders. In addition, a mentoring component, involving prior MFIP participants, community elders, business and educational professionals, is included in the ‘Expanding the Circle’ training curriculum. Professional mentoring and networking is offered through the ‘Expanding the Circle’ program.

YW Works seeks to create relationships between participants and the community which empowers the individual to make positive changes in their lives. **Culturally specific mentoring**, aimed at assisting participants to build positive relationships by connecting with the larger community, is facilitated through small group and one-on-one mentoring experiences.

HIRED refers MFIP participants to partner Family Wise for **one-to-one mentoring** from community members. Other clients may be matched with individuals who volunteer to serve as mentors through HIRED’s established volunteer program, which includes orientation, training and supervision from a HIRED staff member. Participants are also invited to take part in weekly

roundtable discussions on topics such as work/life balance, managing stress, financial literacy, job search skills and labor market trends. Sessions are led by volunteers from the local business community and HIRED staff. The roundtable discussions are designed to help participants connect with each other and offer mutual support. These weekly roundtable discussions, offered in the context of group mentoring, help clients connect with each other and offer mutual support in skill building and meeting the challenges of employment, parenting and maintaining a healthy household.

HAP provides **culturally appropriate mentoring** and parenting services through the “We are the Peace” talking circles. Peer-mentoring is available through “Welcoming Circles” where immigrant families mentor and support *recently arrived* refugees.

Goodwill Easters Seal MN has a well-established, nationally recognized and **evidence-based mentoring program** that provides services to ex-offenders. The existing knowledge, resources and core practices of this model are being leveraged to develop a high quality mentoring program for MFIP participants. Group and individual mentoring services are offered to enrolled participants. The group mentoring sessions, offered bi-monthly, will include the most relevant and needed topics chosen through participant feedback. While all volunteer mentors and participant mentees attend group mentoring, those participants requesting more guidance and support are matched with an individual mentor to work on specific goals related to parenting, securing and maintaining employment and basic life skills. G/ESM recruits volunteer mentors having experience with and knowledge of struggles faced by low-income parents. These volunteers are recruited from various arenas including community and faith based organizations, business leaders connected to G/ESM and successful past MFIP participants.

EAC’s MFIP services have developed **formal and informal mentoring relationships** for participants. Community leaders across many sectors participate as speakers and workshop presenters. EAC also works to assist participants in developing a peer network to provide support and also holds group mentoring activities. In addition, EAC has a Women Achieving New Directions program for working mothers to help them advance in their career and dramatically increase their income leading to greater self-sufficiency. An important component of this program is building a relationship with a mentor.

Workforce Solutions has piloted a “home visiting” mentoring services portion of the NdCad Parent Power program which includes visits to participant’s homes by staff who are former participants themselves as well as board members who are representative of the low-income African American community.

In summary, Workforce Solutions encourages agencies in their development of mentoring programs that suit the agency’s vision and mission. Workforce Solutions expectation is that agencies implement a more fully developed mentoring program plan by July 1, 2014. Planners will discuss with agencies at monitoring visits.