Lexington Presbyterian Church
Mentoring Team
Program Overview

Version 1.0

DRAFT

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Mentoring Strategy Group

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Mission:

The Lexington Presbyterian Church (LPC) Mentoring Team's mission is, with God's help, to heal and nurture families, guiding them from desperate and dependent situations to hope and independent living.

Program Overview:

The LPC mentoring team is an ad hoc sub-committee of the LPC Outreach Committee. The team's budget is part of LPC's operating budget.

The purpose of the mentoring team is to provide long term, and at times intensive, support to a family at a time of distress and help the family transition from welfare to independence. Depending on community needs, there may be several active teams supporting multiple families simultaneously.

A family, or individual, can be referred into the mentoring program through many sources but primarily through the local social services office. The family or individual must meet the established mentoring team criteria (see "Eligibility Criteria" section below). Once accepted, the family/individual will be referred to as a client.

A unique team of volunteers is recruited based on the specific needs of each client. Each team may last three months or three years depending on the needs of the client.

Team members provide clients with coaching for financial, legal, emotional and career issues and make professional referrals when indicated. Clients are expected to participate fully in their own transition. They should also identify barriers to their success, and work to overcome these barriers with the support and guidance of the mentoring team members.

Who Are We and What Do We Provide?

Who Are We?

We are a team of Christian men and women with a variety of skills and abilities. We volunteer our time to partner with clients in need and help them work toward independence. Different team members assist in different ways, depending on their skills and life experiences.

What Services Do We Provide?

We are committed to long-term relationships with clients to help them in areas such as jobs, transportation, money management, and other life skills.

Our Primary goal is <u>not</u> to provide emergency relief. Instead, we try to anticipate and to prevent crises, and help keep the client stabilized.

We administer a small budget for emergency health needs and other acute needs, such as car maintenance/repairs. We fund acute needs on a case-by-case basis, with an eye towards preventing near-term crises.

Client Privacy

The mentoring group is committed to keeping each client's identity and situation private. However, during the course of mentoring and/or during times when we have to access resources and/or expertise outside of the mentoring team, we may have to disclose personal information about the client. For example, contact information, current circumstances, etc. At all times the team should only disclose what is minimally necessary to achieve its goal. The team should advise the client what information will be disclosed and to whom.

What is Our Process?

Initially, we listen to the client, assess his/her needs and willingness to change, offer encouragement, and start to build a trusting relationship. Then, with full participation of the client, we provide support by brainstorming possible solutions and establish short- and long-term goals. We also schedule meetings to assess the client's progress toward established goals.

Examples of What We Do:

Mentoring Team members provide advice and services based on their skills and life experiences. Below are examples of the advice/services we provide:

- teach money management skills, e.g., budgeting, debt assessment, taxes, savings plans
- help find community resources for housing and childcare;
- help network and research jobs, including help with resumes, interviews and recommendations;
- assist with applications for aid and education;
- provide resources and referrals for legal advice, medical attention, car purchase, maintenance and repairs.

Community Resources

Each LPC Mentoring Team is organized to help a client progress toward independence. Depending on the client's circumstances, this process can be short term or long term. Teams do not have the resources and/or expertise to address prospective clients who are in crisis situations. Instead, these individuals should be referred to other local organizations that can provide the needed services and/or support.

We network with other organizations and refer clients, where appropriate, for resources they don't have, such as: RARA, Food Bank, Social Services, Campus Kitchen (CK), Project Horizon, Habitat, Total Action Against Poverty (TAP), Mission Next Door(MND), schools and mental health services like Rockbridge Area Community Services (RACS). The Mentoring Team is currently compiling a comprehensive list of local resources.

Eligibility Criteria

Our target group is families or individuals in distress, but not in crisis. Crisis is defined as events or circumstances that if not resolved or addressed within 72 hours will result in dire consequences to the client. For example, eviction, foreclosure, loss of government support, etc.

Distress situations should be addressed in the near term so that they don't fester and become crisis. For example, managing outstanding debts, and finding and maintaining gainful employment and adequate housing, etc.

The following steps are used to assess whether a prospective client would benefit from the mentoring program.

- A prospective client should complete an application (attached) and send it to the mentoring team leader.
- The mentoring team leader may use the attached "Interviewing Process" to evaluate whether or not a prospective client would benefit from Mentoring Team services.

Basic requirements of a prospective client:

A client should:

- have at least two of the five following essential attributes:
    - shelter
    - job
    - automobile

    - telephone
    - bank account,

- live within 10 miles of Lexington Presbyterian Church,
- be willing to make changes in their lives and/or behavior, and
- be willing to work in partnership with teams.

Client Responsibilities

The LPC Mentoring Team brings together church members and other volunteers with varied background and life experiences to help guide a client toward independence.

Mentoring team members provide advice and guidance, and in some cases, interventions, to help the client achieve his/her goals. To maximize the team's effectiveness, the client must be committed to his/her own success. Accordingly, the client is expected, at a minimum, to do the following:

- Participate in establishing goals and milestones,
- Take actions to achieve stated goals within established time frame,
- Tell the truth, which includes providing all pertinent information even though it might be personally painful, so that we can build a trusting relationship and develop appropriate solutions,
- Attend scheduled meetings and be prepared to contribute to the meeting agenda,
- Respond to questions/requests in a timely manner, and
- Propose solutions to address identified issues.

These expectations should be presented to the client to ensure he/she understands them and accepts the responsibility to follow through. We should consider what, if any, consequences there will be if the client violates one or more of these expectations.

What Should Clients Expect from Us?

Different clients may have different expectations. Some clients in the past have expected continuous financial assistance, which is not something we are able or willing to provide. The following is a non-exhaustive list of what clients may realistically expect from mentoring teams.

- sympathetic ear, a shoulder to lean on,
- temporary financial assistance to avoid falling into crisis, such as a one-time payment of a utility bill,
- help with learning coping skills, such as using a bank's services, making a budget, keeping living expenses low, presenting well to a current or prospective employer,
- assistance finding car, job, and/or suitable housing, and
- help with identifying the client's strengths and personal resources that can be used to achieve his/her stated goals.

We should ask each client what she/he expects of us and give feedback about whether such expectations are realistic.

Establish a Mentoring Team

Once a prospective client is identified, the team leader will form a team based on the prospective client's needs. Ideally, there should be a core team of approximately five members and ad hoc members who have special skills, e.g., resume writing, financial planning, etc.

The Mentoring Team should compile a list of church members and other volunteers who are willing to serve on the team. The list should also include each member's area of interest or specialty.

Application Process

As part of the screening and acceptance process, there will be three separate meetings with the prospective client.

First Meeting

The first meeting will be between the team leader and the prospective client. The purpose of the meeting is to get acquainted and to start to build a relationship. Moreover, the team leader should help the prospective client start focusing on positive aspects of his/her life. Finally, this meeting provides an opportunity to learn more about the client's situation, including:

- what she/he expects of us, and give feedback about whether such expectations are realistic,

- what goals (high level) he/she has established or wishes to establish:

    - short term – next six months
    - long term – in five years,

- which of the prospective client's personal resources and strengths can be used to achieve stated goals,

- what work skills he/she possesses, and

- what obstacles/barriers exist that may prevent him/her from being successful.

The team leader will review the LPC Mentoring Team's mission statement with the prospective client and ensure the client understands his/her responsibilities in the program.

At this point the team leader, the prospective client, or both parties might decide that the LPC Mentoring Team program is not a good fit, i.e., we will not be able to work together. Accordingly, that will signal the end of the relationship.

Should both parties decide to proceed the team leader will ask the prospective client to make an inventory of the following documents and bring it to next interview, including:

- proofs of income – pay stub
- social security letter
- driver's license
- food stamp card
- Medicaid cards for all family members
- social security cards for all family members
- credit report (available through Habitat for $7.50)

These documents are needed by various agencies to determine eligibility and/or to provide services. The purpose of this inventory is to determine what documents are currently available, and if necessary, what actions are needed to obtain missing documents.

The team leader will also provide the prospective client with a copy of the standard questionnaire (Attachment 1). The purpose of the questionnaire is to document information that the team leader will use to recruit appropriate team members. The prospective client should be encouraged to complete as much of the information on the questionnaire as possible and bring it to the next meeting.

Second Meeting

The primary purpose of the second meeting is to help the team leader more fully understand the new client's expectations and requirements, and continue to build the relationship. This can be accomplished through reviewing and clarifying answers to the questionnaire. Moreover, this meeting provides the client an opportunity to address any questions or concerns he/she might have. The second meeting should take place as quickly as the parties' schedule will allow, but no longer than two weeks after the first meeting.

Third Meeting

The third meeting will be between the newly formed mentoring team and the client. The primary purpose of this meeting is to allow team members and the client to meet and to address any questions or concerns. The completed questionnaire will be an invaluable guide for the discussion. The mentoring team should also use this opportunity to reinforce our expectations of the client. Afterwards, both client and team can decide whether or not to continue the association.

If all agree, we will ask the client to sign an agreement that all information he/she has provided is correct and that he/she will be a partner with us in his/her transition to independence. We will assure him/her that all information is confidential. We will also schedule the next meeting along with topics to cover, and start the process of scheduling subsequent meetings.

CAUTION: We don't want to be so structured and have so many requirements that no one will seek our counsel.

How Do We Measure Success

Every situation is so different and all the needs vary; so it is difficult to measure "success." The mentoring teams know that we have helped individuals and families through some difficult times and to a better life. Our efforts were to provide a caring relationship, try to see things from their perspective, and teach problem solving by example. Using these criteria we believe we have been successful.

Past efforts may be more "successful" for the mentoring teams than for clients, but certainly everybody benefited from the experiences of caring. We didn't try to make them Christian but we met at church, began and ended with prayers, and talked about The Church. We hope they feel closer to God because of this mentoring experience.

For the team, it was a chance to help less fortunate people relationally instead of usual check writing, to do God's work on a personal level. (It may be added that "success" cannot be measured, although the term has been used here. It is used in quotes along with the idea of accepting the family instead of making judgments about their decisions. These families are in need basically because of past bad decisions, but now we move on). . . .Amen

Case Summaries

The LPC Mentoring Program has served many families within the Greater Rockbridge area for 15 years. Case summaries on some of the families are included to provide the reader a sense of what this program does (Attachment 2).

Next Steps

This version of the program summary focused on documenting the major processes with which we administer the program. Along the way, we identified other components that should be addressed in subsequent version of this document. Accordingly, we have recorded these components in our "Parking Lot" and included it as Attachment 3.

Attachment 1
Lexington Presbyterian Church
Mentoring Team
Questionnaire for Prospective Clients

1. What are the positive aspects of your life?

2. What are do you consider your strength?

    a. Trustworthiness
    b. Honesty
    c. Punctuality
    d. Others

3. Which agencies have you contacted?

4. What assistance are you or someone in your family currently getting?

    a. Medicaid
    b. Food stamps
    c. TANF (If Yes, how long)
    d. WIC
    e. SSI
    f. Unemployment
    g. Housing
    h. Other

5. What is your current support system?

    a. Family
    b. Neighbor
    c. Friends
    d. Community
    e. Others

6. Client's Current Situation?

    a. What are your financial resources?
    b. Do you have a bank account (checking/savings) account?
    c. Do you belong or attend a church?
    d. Are you willing to work?
    e. Do you have a driver's license?
    f. Do you have a car?

7. Financial information

    a. What is your income?
    b. Do you have any debts? If yes, how much and to whom?
    c. Are you willing to work with a budget counselor?

8. Are you working? If not currently employed:

    a. What are your job skills?
    b. What is your employment history?
    c. Do you need help with job training, child care, transportation, and/or resume writing?

9. What are your goals – immediate, mid-term, long term?

10. Are you willing to participate in improving your situation?

Attachment 2
Lexington Presbyterian Church
Mentoring Team
Case Summaries

Overview

The program helped approximately eight families in the last 15 years with about 40 church members participating, some on more than one team. Each family, or client, was referred by Social Services, and a caseworker was on each team. The program is ongoing but with different leadership and perhaps a different slant.

Every client except one was a single mother with one to three children. Basically they all needed jobs, transportation, help with household money problems and child care. Intangibly, they needed affirmation, confidence, caring, and problem solving skills.
In every case the team allowed the client to "take the lead." Our purpose was to assist with specific needs, and the caseworker was our resource.

Case #1

The first client's story began in a crowded mobile home (with a friend and 6 children). Immediately the mother needed a place to live and a job. (She came to us bitter, angry, defensive, and she left Lexington thankful, happy, and filled with pride.) She wanted a career in food service, so we helped her interview at VMI; she got the job and was happy there. We helped her move into an apartment in town so she could walk to work and walk her two girls to Waddell. We helped her furnish the apartment and get on her feet financially, and even occasionally provided overnight sleeping for the kids and transportation to work and school on a stormy day.

Final story is that the school got counseling for the children (and for the mother who initially objected to counseling at all); after two years the mother reconciled with her father and moved to Colorado, got a federal grant, went to school, and is now a counselor. We hear from her periodically and assume she is well; she has sent pictures of the kids. It's quite a success story for her. (A postscript is that she came to church a number of times with her biracial girls, and we hope she felt welcomed.)

Case #2

A single mom with older children came needing a job and basic help. She had some clerical skills, so after helping her with a resume, she temporarily filled in at the church office after we helped her get a car (she lived in Natural Bridge). She then found a job as a service station desk clerk and subsequently moved to Salem in a similar job to be near her sister. Several team members have visited her at work several times, and she was doing well.

Case #3

A single woman who wanted to be an LPN needed to take some additional community college classes. She was working as a night desk clerk at a local motel. A federal education initiative was paying for her career classes. We helped her with minor expenses for a short time and lost touch; hopefully she is now in the medical field.

Case #4

This client was a mother of a 7-year old child. We met with her a number of times, set up job interviews for her, (she couldn't get the courage to go), we gave her daughter clothes, but she suddenly stopped coming to meetings. One day one of the team members saw her in a store, and she made a real point of running across the store to tell her that she was getting married. She was working at the same McDonald's, was really happy, and that's the last contact; so we chalk that up as "success."

Case #5

Another client was a couple with two boys. Things seemed better when the husband was in jail. The mother seemed to really care about her boys' school success. We were with her for several years. Just as things were going well, her mobile home at South River was flooded; we helped get her back on her feet, then her husband died suddenly; it was one crisis thing and another and a need for money. An accountant on our team tried desperately to help her keep household records. (That seems to be a perpetual problem with families.) We finally drew the line, and stopped seeing her; we have lost touch.

Case #6

The next client, a woman with two dogs (pit bull and rottweiler), monopolized our meetings with all her tales of accidents, needs, and this and that. We listened, but after several attempts for better housing, we decided it was impossible with the dogs, which she would not leave. She had a good job. Her basic need was for housing (she was being evicted). She was eventually fired from her good job, and Social Services recommended we discontinue meetings because of the strong possibility that drugs were involved, and we could not handle those problems.

Case #7

One of the most promising clients was a mother of a little boy who wanted to go into law enforcement. She was under a lot of pressure because her jailed husband was getting out on parole and wanted custody of the child, etc. We helped her locate child care and to plan for the future with community college classes. We got her a vehicle, helped her get a job and learn better problem solving techniques; but then crisis hit, and she stopped coming to meetings and avoided us and Social Services. Even with some encouragement from us and from social services, she did not reciprocate.

Case #8

The most successful story may be about a family who now lives in a Habitat House. A team worked with her several years. The details will be made available in a future installment of case studies.

Summary

There is one basic, obvious, overall need for all our families in addition to a job, and that is a car to get to that job. LPC members have donated at least 15 cars in the last 15 years. Now in 2011, the available RATS bus service is invaluable to people getting to work.

Attachment 3
Lexington Presbyterian Church
Mentoring Team
Parking Lot Items

Date	Parking Lot Item	Explanation	Submitted by
3/24/11	Guidelines for paying for clients' expenses	Develop framework to decide under what circumstances we should use program money to pay for clients' expenses (e.g., utilities, car repair, etc.)	Margie
4/7/11	Program Evaluation by Outside Organizations	Invite representatives from other organizations to evaluate our program to ensure our program don't overlap with other organizations and is realistic in scope. Furthermore, we seek feedback for to improve our program.	Margie
4/7/11	Establish "Contracts" with Client	Seek commitment from client for established goals. One suggestion was to write-down the goal and ask the client to place it in a conspicuous place, e.g., refrigerator door.	Margie
4/28/11	Develop Standard Agenda	Develop a template that team can used to develop agenda for client meetings. One of the agenda items should be "Celebrate Success". With all of the problems and stress clients face we should take a moment to highlight the successes, no matter how small, along the way.	Margie
4/28/11	Distinguish Between "Core Team" and "Specialists"	Mentoring should include a small cadre of members, e.g., 5 members. Meanwhile, the Mentoring Group should establish and maintain a list of "specialists" in various areas, e.g., budgeting, interviewing, etc., that can augment the core team as the need arises.	Malcolm
4/28/11	Conduct Mock Job Interviews	One way to help a client prepare for a job interview is to ask a local hiring manager in similar position to conduct a mock interview. For example, if the client is interviewing for a restaurant job, perhaps the manager from Applebees can conduct a mock interview and provide feedback.	Lai
4/28/11	Schedule Social Events	Scheduling social events to provide an opportunity for clients to network and meet new friends. Should include children.	Malcolm
4/28/11	Pair Clients with Former Clients	We should pair a client with someone who is currently or was formally in similar situations as the client. The group believes the pairing can better foster communications.	Becky
5/17/11	Communications Plan	Formalize how we communicate the team's need to church members. Ideally, it should be incorporated into the church's overall communications media.	Becky