

# **Inclusive Mentoring for Youth with Disabilities**

**Tuesday, July 25th, 2:30-4:30pm**

**Renee Angelo-Mauk, SHRM-CP, PMQ**



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# MENTOR

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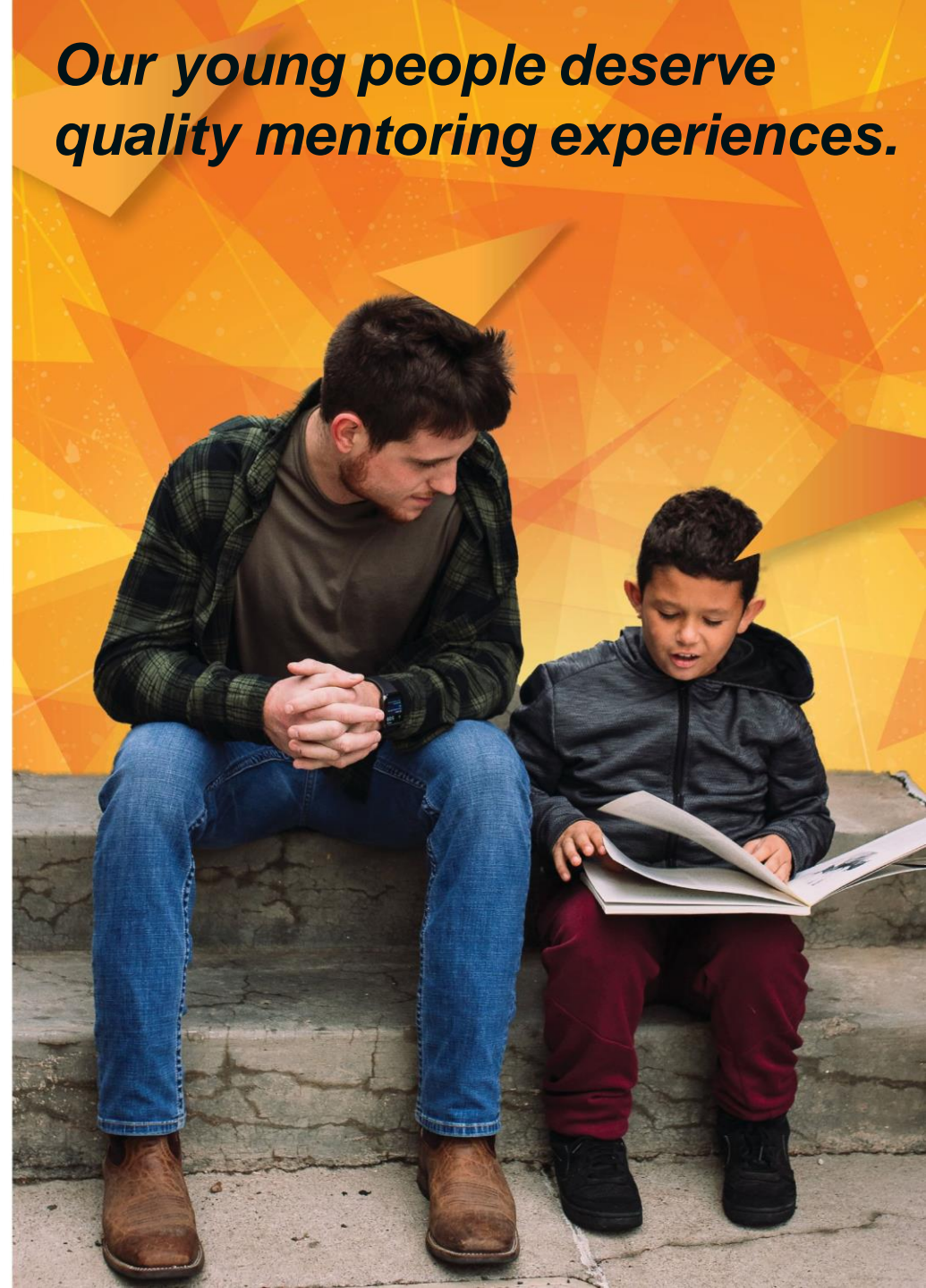
Since Maryland's affiliate of [MENTOR: The National Mentoring Partnership](#) launched in 2018, **MENTOR Maryland | DC** has sought to uplift the urgency of a march toward quality mentoring. We officially expanded into DC in 2021.

With the mission and vision to increase the quality and quantity of mentoring relationships across the country and to **close the mentoring gap**, we know programs can only do this when they feel supported, empowered and have the tools and resources to sufficiently carry out safe and effective mentoring relationships.

[MENTOR Maryland | DC](#) is a non-partisan organization that galvanizes the Maryland mentoring movement. We serve as community-based experts and create statewide infrastructure to expand quality relationships for young people.

We fulfill this role through our unique role as a unified clearinghouse for training, research, public awareness, mentor recruitment, and advocacy. MENTOR Maryland | DC provides the critical link between MENTOR's national efforts and local organizations and programs that foster and support quality mentoring relationships across the state.

*Our young people deserve quality mentoring experiences.*



# Offerings from MENTOR MD|DC

**Connection to National Mentoring Partnership; resources, best practices, trainings, etc. (including National Mentoring Summit) – [www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)**

**FREE Program Consulting/Technical Assistance via NMRC (National Mentoring Resource Center) – [www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org](http://www.nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org)**

**Access to Mentoring Connector – <https://mentormddc.org/mentoringconnector/>**

**Local, customized trainings, roundtables, communities of practice – <https://mentormddc.org/events/>**

**Promotion of mentoring best practices: [The Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring](#)**

**Access to NQMS (National Quality Mentoring System) / Soon MM Quality Program Partners**

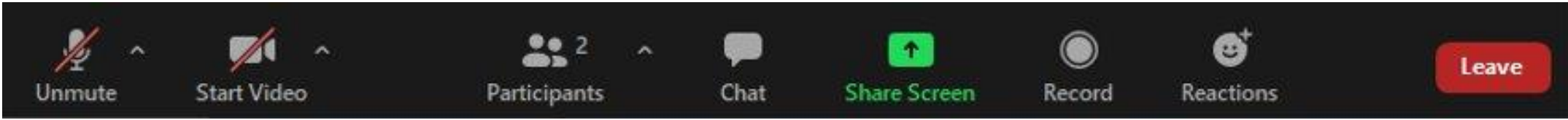
**Connection to funding opportunities – [www.grants.maryland.gov](http://www.grants.maryland.gov)**

**Access to <https://www.mentoring.org/resource/start-a-program/>**

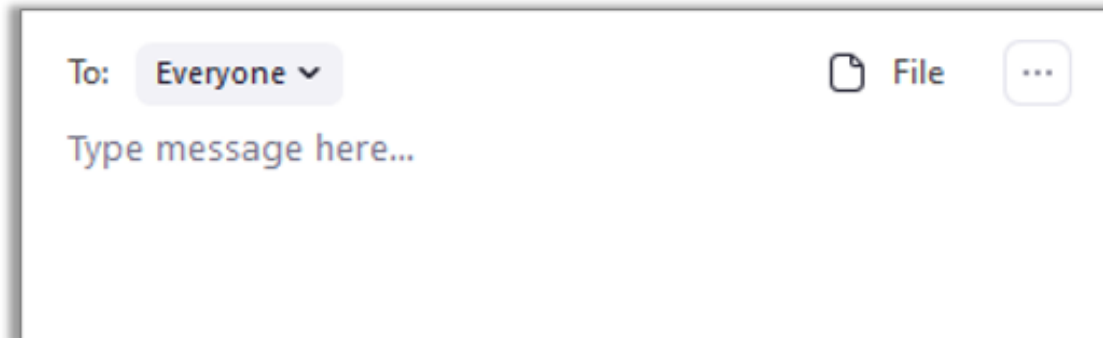
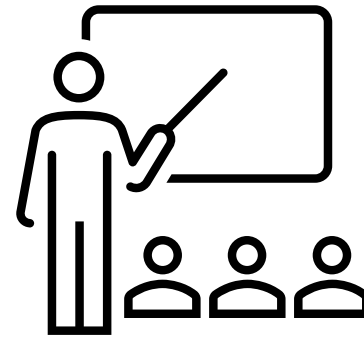
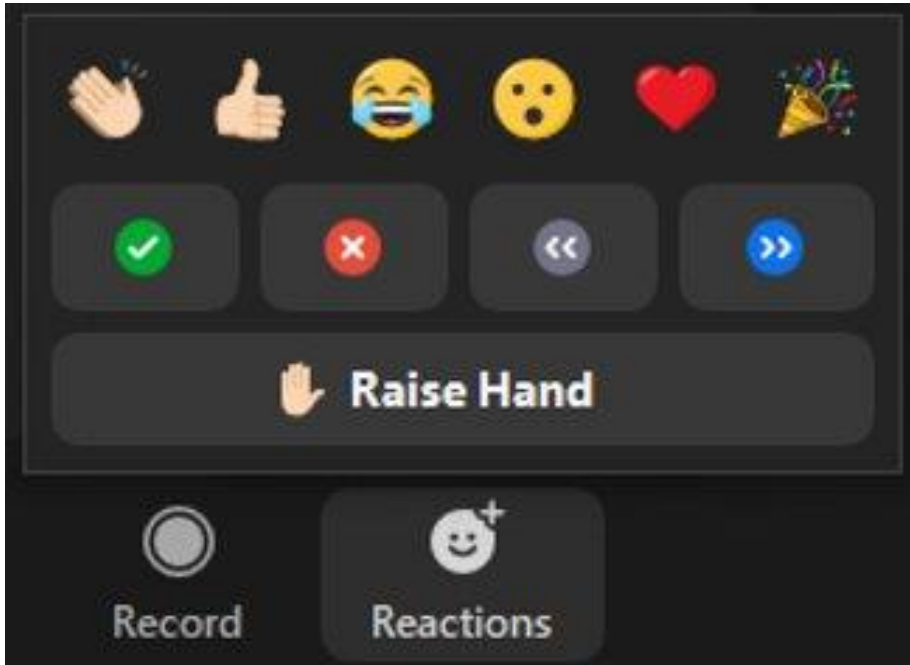


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# Webinar Logistics



*We appreciate your space and grace in this virtual environment!*





# Community Standards



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# MENTOR MD|DC Community Standards

- Our community is open to ALL - but we also acknowledge the deep-seated racism, sexism, homo and transphobia, misogyny, and ableism that is pervasive in our country. We stand against these isms and actively work to this aim, especially with our youth. This means we must acknowledge that we also approach our work differently and beautifully.
- Share openly. Listen more openly. But be open when your sharing might hurt.
- Be generous with positive assumptions but don't be afraid to ask genuine questions.
- No matter your role here today, be a host.
- We don't endeavor to create safe or comfortable spaces, but rather brave spaces where discomfort can be explored, and beliefs and practices challenged.
- We want this community and experience to be supportive and educational, but also fun! Please bring your full (present) self - it is welcome!
- No fixing, saving, advising or correcting each other.



# Renee Angelo-Mauk



- 17+ years working in non-profits & youth development
- 10 years working in mentoring & living in Baltimore
- Returned Peace Corps Volunteer, Malawi 2011-13
- AmeriCorps Alum, 2013-14
- 3<sup>rd</sup> generation Italian American
- Gender non-conforming woman, she/they
- Queer person in hetero-marriage
- Disabled (unapparent, dynamic), neurodiverse

- I. The Context & Key Concepts
- II. Investment in Inclusive Practices
- III. Program Planning, Leadership, and Operations
- IV. Standards of Mentoring Practice for Inclusivity
  - Recruitment, screening, training, matching, supporting relationships, closure
- V. Discussion



# There are more than three million youth in America who are living with a disability.

*Mentoring providers have an ethical imperative to meet the unique needs of youth with disabilities and ensure that their mentoring experience is both equitable and high quality.*

Many young people with disabilities who face social exclusion and lower quality relationships with peers are more likely to be struggling at school and receiving special education services and have less access to educational and employment opportunities as they approach adulthood.

A major 2018 research review by the National Mentoring Resource Center found evidence that mentoring can help youth with disabilities improve their academic and career development, employment and job readiness, transition and life skills, and psychosocial development.



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# Key Concepts & Language

- **The Americans with Disabilities Act** (July 26th, 1990)
- **Disability:** a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities
  - Visible, nonapparent, dynamic, intellectual, mental/health conditions, learning
- **Accommodations:** modifications or adjustments that enable an equitable experience for an individual with a disability
- **Disability Etiquette:** the guidelines for respectful and inclusive ways to communicate with and about people with disabilities



## Medical Model Understanding of Disability



The problem is  
the disabled person

So you see  
it's the barriers  
within society that  
disables you



## Social Model Understanding of Disability



The problem is the barriers within society

PHYSICAL AND  
ENVIRONMENTAL  
BARRIERS

INSTITUTIONAL &  
ORGANISATIONAL  
BARRIERS

INFORMATION &  
COMMUNICATION  
BARRIERS

ATTITUDINAL  
BARRIERS



# Key Concepts & Language

- **Universal Design:** the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability, or disability.
- **Intersectionality:** the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender as they apply to an individual or group, regarded as creating overlapping or interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage]
- **Ableism:** the discrimination and bias against disabled people and the ways society is structured to favor abled people. Based on the belief that typical abilities are superior and is rooted in the false narrative that people with disabilities cannot contribute or should be fixed.



# Key Concepts & Language

- **Internalized Ableism:** disabled people viewing themselves in relation to others thru the layers of systemic oppression
- **Disability Pride:** taking pride in one's whole self, including the disability
- **Credible Messenger:** mentor with life experience similar to the mentee
- **Self Determination:** acting as the primary causal agent in one's life and making choices and decisions regarding one's quality of life free from undue external influence
  - Youth with disabilities often have lower levels of self-determination
  - idea here is that the individual feels in charge and capable of steering the course of their own life and achievements



# Person First Identity First

- Person with a disability
- Person who is blind

- A disabled person
- An autistic person

Some prefer person-first language, which is centering the person as the focus.

Others prefer identity-first language and prefer to center disability as one of the important elements of their identity.

# Proactive Investment in Inclusivity

- Actively seeking out those with disabilities and inviting them in
- Emphasizing representation of those with disabilities
- Learning more about disability
- Recommended Reading & Learning:
  - *Demystifying Disability: What to Know, What to Say, and How to Be an Ally* by Emily Ladau
  - *Disability Visibility Project: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* by Alice Wong





# Program Planning, Leadership, and Operations

# Initial Steps for Inclusive Practice



- Get buy-in and commitment to inclusion efforts from program and organizational leadership
- Assess your current organizational climate around disability
- Establish a baseline to understand how many individuals with disabilities currently participate in the program

# Examine and revise program policies to support inclusive practice

- Develop a public inclusion statement
- Examine and revise policies around hiring staff or managing volunteers
- Strengthen policies related to bullying and harassment



# Examine and ensure physical accessibility

- Physical accessibility is a foundational and often overlooked element of inclusivity. Physical accessibility should be ensured for the mentoring office or headquarters, any community-based sites, and for any community-based events or activities sponsored or promoted by the mentoring program
- Benchmark your website against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines' standards



# Examine and revise planned program activities and events

- Build in a higher youth to staff ratio
- Built extra time into the agenda
- Build in extra space
- Provide choices
- Communicate in multiple choices
- Use what's known as "Plain Language"
- Communicate expectations thoroughly and in advance



# Proactively hire staff with disabilities

- Sending interview questions ahead of time to allow an applicant more time for processing information
- Ensuring that interview location is physically accessible
- Ensuring that any requested accommodations are provided
- Posting the position in locations that may attract applicants with disabilities



# Offer robust training & professional development on disability topics

- Individual self-assessments on [learn.pyd.org](https://learn.pyd.org)
  - Personal perceptions, knowledge gaps and biases
- foundational training topics that can increase staff confidence and competence, such as inclusive communication and disability etiquette, universal design and universal design for learning, understanding the ADA, and addressing challenging behavior

# Build an accessibility/accommodations budget

- It is most effective to build this expense into your overall organizational budget so that it can include accommodations for participants, volunteers, and staff
  - Keeps funds in a neutral place that does not take away from direct program dollars
- a centralized accessibility/accommodations budget emphasizes disability inclusion as an organizational priority

# Form partnerships with local disability organizations and agencies

- a valuable source of mentors, trainers, referrals, and other supports to the program and its participants.
- These organizations can be valuable sources of feedback, resources, ongoing assessments, and general disability expertise
- National Disability Mentoring Coalition is an opportunity to engage in resource sharing with other disability mentoring practitioners



# Conduct periodic & ongoing organizational assessments and policy reviews

- Surveying mentees, families, and mentors, especially those with disabilities, to understand their experience in the program and their perception of the program's inclusion efforts
- Evaluate your demographic information if more participants with disabilities are engaged
- Develop a participant advisory board that includes participants with disabilities
- Retaking the organizational assessment to see how you're improving



# Address incidents of discrimination & exclusion quickly & thoroughly

- This is where you walk the walk!
- Make sure your policies and procedures have clear responsibilities, protocols, and timelines of action
- consider the ways in which people can bring up these issues and why people may be reluctant to do so based on past precedent or power dynamics
- Staying on top of incidents that run counter to your rules or values as an organization requires frequent check-ins with staff and participants



# Standards of Mentoring Practice for Inclusivity



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# Participant Recruitment

- Benchmark all program websites and online content against the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- Ensure that youth and adults with disabilities are represented in recruitment materials
- Offer recruitment materials in a variety of formats to accommodate those with disabilities
- Include information in recruitment materials about the program's commitment and practices designed to be welcoming and inclusive of mentors and mentees with disabilities
- Ask about any accommodation needs prior to delivering recruitment presentations



# Participant Recruitment

- Share information about the program in advance of recruitment presentations
- Recruit a mix of mentors with and without various disabilities
- Emphasize the recruitment of mentors (and staff) who have prior experience working with youth with disabilities
- Detail the specific benefits to youth with disabilities and their parents/caregivers in recruitment materials
- Have staff with disabilities lead recruitment presentations
- Partner with local organizations who can help with the recruitment of participants with disabilities



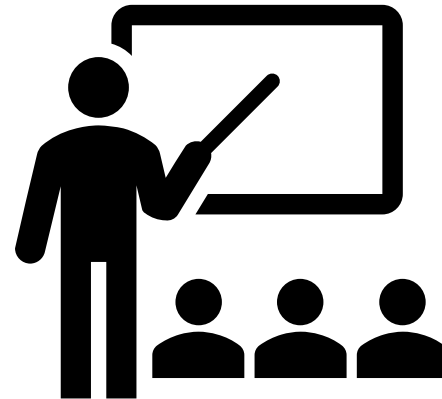
# Participant Screening & Acceptance

- Proactively gather information about disability needs and strengths when youth and mentors apply to the program
- Offer accommodations around screening tasks and activities
- Ask questions or present scenarios about working with those with disabilities when screening mentors, so that the program can assess potentially harmful bias or prejudice
- Emphasize language around program's antibullying and disability inclusion policies when mentors and youth sign any commitment agreements for their participation
- Get youths' written assent to participating in the program experience



# Participant Training

- Act on reasonable requests for accommodation during training
- Provide mentors specific training topics that will support their continued and ongoing work with the disability community
- Include some form of self-assessment on disability awareness and bias during mentor training
- Offer disability-specific program orientation to parents and caregivers of youth with disabilities



# Matching & Initiation of Relationships

- Honor the preferences of the mentees in the program (to the degree possible) during the matching process
- Consider any transportation issues or other logistical factors involved with arranging meetings between mentors and mentees
- Before making a match, ask mentees and mentors with disabilities what information about their disability they are comfortable sharing in advance with their prospective match partner



# Supporting Mentoring Relationships

- Check in with the mentee and mentor on a consistent basis
- Honor accommodation requests and participant needs when conducting match check-ins and offering match support
- Share information about upcoming program activities, especially group outings and special field trips, well in advance
- Facilitate ongoing learning activities, training, and referrals that support disabled mentors and mentees in their personal and professional lives
  - Anti-bullying training, resume/cover letter workshops, mock job/college interviews, stress management/wellness tips, goal setting and support skills, independent living skills and transitions from care



# Relationship Closure & Program Exit

- Prepare mentors and mentees for the closure experience with as much lead time as possible
- Ensure the closure experience offers opportunities for celebration, reflection, and referral



*Questioning?*



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# MENTOR MANIA WEEK

IS

COMING!



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*Thank You*



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