

## OPSOA MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

### Background

In the spring of 2004, the OPSOA Board of Directors launched the mentorship program expanding its commitment to provide a wide range of professional development and individual mentorship for newly appointed supervisory officials. The one year pilot program was an unqualified success and the OPSOA membership recently voted to continue the program into the future. Information gathered from the initial participants has led to program solidification and expansion.

### Key Features of the Program

The program is grounded in partnership philosophy and begins upon request usually following appointment to a position or a new portfolio. Trained mentors work one-on-one with mentees for approximately one year to meet their specific needs. A series of face-to-face meetings are held supplemented by phone and e-mail communications. Confidentiality is a prime component of the mentoring relationship. Topics for the first and subsequent meetings include but are not limited to:

Exchange of résumés	Overview of the program
Schedule of meetings	Types of communication
Expectations/outcomes	Long and short range planning
Mentee strengths/needs	Administrative supports
What are you proud of since our last meeting?	What's keeping you awake at night?
Present working environment of the mentee	Entry plan
Mentee job description	Current hot issues
What do you want to get out of this relationship?	How are you staying balanced?

The face-to-face meetings are viewed as the cornerstone of the program. Comments from mentees regarding the importance of the meetings include:

“Very helpful. Reassuring. Enormous insight and value. I looked forward to the meetings greatly.”  
 “This was the most meaningful part of the program for me.”  
 “It was a great opportunity to share and gain confidence in the role, seek advice and grow in the role.”  
 “Exceptionally valuable. At each meeting we set the plan for what we would discuss the next time.”  
 “It helped me articulate my thoughts, plans and actions. It helped me reflect on my practice and provided me with encouragement and support.”

### Who Can Participate?

Any member of OPSOA is eligible to participate in the program.

## Who Are the Mentors?

Mentors are OPSOA Alumni members who have expressed an interest in becoming involved in the program. They are individuals with current knowledge of the educational scene who want to use this activity as a means to benefit their former profession and give back to the OPSOA organization. Mentors may or may not have worked in the same board as the mentees. Both models have worked successfully in the pilot program. Mentors usually have experience in the portfolio of the mentee. Participating boards do have input into the mentor selection process.

## Mentoring as a Professional Development Activity

The mentoring program is a personal, continuous one-on-one learning opportunity for the mentees. The experience has extraordinary potential for a mentee who is committed to the process. **Mentees** who have been involved have said:

“Mentorship is more than P.D. It was a relationship with trust, expertise and more importantly the opportunity to follow-up and track events and decisions.”

“This is an extremely rich experience from the standpoint of it being one-on-one. I really don’t know how one could ‘top’ this.”

“The mentorship program is much more focused, needs-based and practical.”

“This is a rare opportunity and I valued it. It was a fabulous experience.”

“Please continue to rate this kind of P.D. very highly. It is important to build a collaborative culture in the supervisory officer ranks. The kind of relationship does much to introduce the effectiveness of the OPSOA organization to the new S.O.s.

## Strengths of the Program

Personalized, focused, flexible, internal and external mentors available, self-directed, high mentor commitment, expanded mentee network, linked to OPSOA, helping others achieve success, participants volunteer to be involved, cost sharing, above and beyond supervisor support, one-on-one, confidential, advice on the politics of the role.

## What Does It Cost?

Administrative fees are provided by OPSOA. Operational costs are shared between OPSOA and participating boards or OPSOA and participating individuals. Costs vary due to geographical distances and are estimated to be approximately \$1,250 per share (half of \$2,500 cost per mentor per year). Considering the nature of the experience and the costs of other types of professional development the amount is extremely competitive.

## How Do I Become Involved?

Speak to your Director or designate who can arrange a mentor program for your board with OPSOA.