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We are delighted to be able to make this case study available to you to help you make your mentoring program a success. This publication was funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools under contract with EMT Associates, Inc. Although this publication has not yet been officially released by the U.S. Department of Education, we have been authorized to make it available on the Web at this time to solicit your feedback.

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Sincerely,

Judy Strother Taylor  
Project Director



# U.S. Department of Education Mentoring Resource Center



## Case Study

*Recruitment: Understanding the Male Perspective*

By Elsy Arévalo and Erika Urbani

### *Introduction*

It is not surprising that finding more mentors is one of the areas of greatest need for the majority of mentoring programs. Mentoring requires an intense investment of time and emotional resources. Volunteers have to go through a thorough screening process before they even get the chance to get started. Additionally, those charged with the task of recruiting volunteers are often overworked and overwhelmed. Their daily work lives involve juggling anything from physically fingerprinting volunteers to providing support to large caseloads of matches.

While it is not surprising to see why recruiting volunteers to be mentors can be challenging, what is particularly interesting is the finding that some groups of volunteers are harder to recruit than others. In mentoring, for example, women are much more likely to volunteer than men. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics males account for 42% of all volunteers in 2003. However, although we see that men do volunteer, the discrepancy in volunteering rates between men and women appears to be especially acute in mentoring programs (The National Mentoring Center Bulletin, 2004)

Why are men more difficult to recruit than women to be mentors? Is it the nature of the work that turns off or scares men? Are our current recruitment messages ineffective in attracting male volunteers? Are there changes or modifications mentoring organizations can do to increase their attractiveness to male mentors?

This case study seeks to help organizations increase their ability to recruit male

volunteers. We will present the best practices of not only one mentoring organization, but also those we have learned and observed by working with hundreds of mentoring programs nationwide. Additionally, findings of a market research study conducted to highlight the needs and motivations of male volunteers and the implications for recruitment practices will be discussed. It is hoped that both the experience of other mentoring organizations in combination with the insights of mentors, will provide you with strategies, tips and ideas that will help you reach even more youth through this important work.

### *Recruitment Best Practices*

**#1 *Tactics alone don't work—to be effective you must have a plan!***

Volunteer recruitment involves much more than simply going out and asking individuals to volunteer. Just as you would not expect your fundraising efforts to succeed without a plan or a system, the same holds true for effective volunteer recruitment. Unfortunately, due to time constraints and pressure to meet large quotas, many organizations simply do not invest the time in developing their recruitment plan. However, it is only when organizations develop a comprehensive approach or system that they are able to increase their effectiveness. This plan or system is particularly important when trying to increase the number of mentors of a specific target group because it will allow

your organization to successfully form and maintain long term relationships, stay on track with your goals, evaluate and learn from your efforts, as well as document and pass on key knowledge to future team members. The key steps of this plan are:

- **Step 1: Background Work**
  - Goal setting: Understanding what you want. How many male mentors do you need by when?
  - Market advantage: Understanding who you are. What about your organization or program is particularly appealing to men?
  - Market research: Understanding who you want. What are the motivations and needs of male mentors
- **Step 2: The Tools**
  - The pitch or message
  - The venues or specific places where you can find potential male volunteers
  - The materials or tools you will use to attract male mentors
- **Step 3: Implementing and Evaluating**

Not surprisingly, the steps involved with a comprehensive recruitment plan make up some of the top recruitment best practices we highlight on this article.

## **#2 Goal Setting: Understanding what you want**

Every effective plan begins with clarity of vision. One of the most common mistakes organizations make in recruiting male mentors or other special population is not focusing their energies on what they want. Clearly defining how many male volunteers you need by when and breaking down your target number into monthly or even weekly activities, will help you stay on track. Goal setting involves three basic steps:

1. Define how many male mentors you need by when
2. Identify your inquiry to mentor ratio, that is, how many inquiries from male volunteers does it takes your

organization on average to get one male mentor

3. Break down the overall number of desired inquiries from men into monthly goals
4. Schedule as many activities monthly geared towards recruiting male volunteers as are necessary to generate the desired number of male mentors

Goal setting will allow you to focus on your goals and to ensure you are dedicating an appropriate percentage of your time to recruitment activities that focus on the specific types of mentors you need.

## **#3 Market Advantage: Understanding and defining your program**

The volunteerism landscape has changed dramatically in recent years. Not only are there more nonprofit organizations seeking volunteers, but there are also many more diverse ways to volunteer. Volunteerism is no longer about simply answering phones or helping with large mailings. Individuals can now travel across the globe to help communities in need, work from home through the use of the Internet, or find volunteer opportunities that incorporate their favorite hobbies. It is no longer enough to recruit by simply stating “make a difference, be a mentor” as there are now a large number of mentoring organizations and an even greater number of exciting ways in which a volunteer can make a difference in their community. Best practice number three highlights the importance of defining and articulating what makes your specific volunteer opportunity and/or your organization different and unique from the rest. As you concentrate your energies on attracting male mentors, ask yourself: What about my specific mentoring program or this organization would be interesting, enticing, or appealing to the male mentor?

## **#4 Provide good customer service and stand out from the crowd**

One way in which organizations can stand out from the crowd is by providing excellent customer service. Effective volunteer recruitment requires that organizations treat their potential mentors with the highest levels of professionalism, courtesy and attention. In this area, much can be learned from customer service oriented businesses. Starbucks, for example, attributes their success to doing more than simply selling coffee instead; they sell a “coffee experience.” An important question to ask yourself is what volunteer experience is your organization offering? Incorporating a 24-hour call back policy is an example of a basic, but important customer service activity that can improve a volunteer’s experience with your organization. Yet we find that this simple recommendation is often overlooked. In 1999 Charles Hobson and Kathryn Malec undertook a quick study of 500 charitable agencies in the metropolitan Chicago area of the United States. Students were recruited to call the organizations and express interest in volunteering. They found that only 48.7% of the time, the potential volunteers were asked for name and phone number *and* only 30% actually received callbacks. Other important customer service activities include sending thank you cards, having an easy to navigate website, and building a personalized and strong relationships with each of your volunteers.

## **#5 Market Research: Understanding motivational factors**

A key recruitment best practice involves understanding the needs and motivations of the populations you are trying to reach. A study released in 2003 by two Belgium researchers documents the gradual decline of collectivism (concern for community) as a motivational force over the past fifty years and an increased emphasis on egoism (self-

focused) as the primary motivational force for volunteering (Hustix & Lammertyn, 2003).

As you recruit male volunteers it is important that you identify and articulate what is in it for them beyond simply “making a difference”. “Remember that volunteers come to you because of something they want — not something you want. Does your organization think about this when you are looking for volunteers?”

Here is a summary of the primary motivations and fears of male volunteers:

### **Primary motivations for males to volunteer include:**

- Make a difference, especially with boys who have no positive male role models
- Have life experiences and skills that they can pass on
- Be part of a group that does fun activities
- Were asked by someone close to them to volunteer
- Challenged to become a mentor

### **Potential fears that men expressed regarding volunteering:**

- Takes time away from being the “breadwinner” (and sense of self-worth does not come from working with youth)
- Takes time away from their own family
- Fear of having to “develop a relationship” with a young person—traditionally a Feminine activity
- Not sure they know how to relate to a young person—what to say or do
- Friends make fun or kid about being a “pervert”
- Staff won’t provide proper support or training
- Might be matched with the wrong mentee

(Adapted from Recruiting Male Volunteers: A Guide Based on Exploratory Research by the Corporation for National Service and Recruiting Male Mentors by NWREL)

Although the above-mentioned list gives you a general sense of the needs and motivations of male volunteers, it is important to dig a little deeper. In identifying what your male volunteers want, you must breakdown

or “segment” the general male volunteer population into smaller subgroups. Market segmentation allows you to identify the needs of specific groups of volunteers that share common values. You can segment the world of potential male volunteers by gender, geography, ethnicity, religion, age, occupation, etc. Once you segment the market, you will more easily be able to identify the specific needs and motivations of each of the subgroups. For instance, instead of generally addressing all potential male volunteers, market segmentation allows you to focus on Latino male college students or male baby boomers retired from the science field. Organizations that invest in doing this type of research and that effectively use this information to create targeted and personalized messages and materials, will be more likely to succeed in male attracting volunteers.

The reviewed best practices, though seemingly simple, are key to success in the recruitment of male mentors. In addition to the suggested programmatic changes, however, it is also imperative to go directly to the source: male volunteers. In the following section, we present the perspective of hundreds of current male mentors and important implications for volunteer recruitment practices.

### ***Understanding the Male Perspective: Recruiting Male Mentors***

Recruiting male mentors has long been seen as a difficult task for mentoring program staff. With numerous young males to match on program waiting lists, a premium has been placed on locating appropriate male volunteers. In order to assist mentoring program staff with their quest to recruit additional male mentors, the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) developed an online mentor survey in which 224 current male mentors from across the nation responded on what motivated them to become mentors and their experiences as part of a mentoring program. CARS also implemented several male mentor focus groups throughout California to discuss ways for mentoring programs to attract potential

male volunteers. This collection of data from current male mentors can be used to assist program staff in creating a targeted recruitment strategy that will appeal to more male volunteers.

So, as program staff, how do you find and recruit these male mentors?! When the mentors were polled they noted that building a relationship with their mentee was their greatest hesitation, but that there were also certain aspects about mentoring that program staff should highlight when recruiting males, such as having fun hanging out with their mentee and encouraging male mentors to talk to each other. The following section highlights the recruitment strategies male participants developed to attract other males into mentoring programs.

#### ***Male Volunteer Motivations for Becoming a Mentor***

- To have fun!
- To use their time in a meaningful way
- To work with youth
- Get involved with the community
- Pass on their experiences

#### ***Male mentors are unsure about how to build relationships***

One of the most disarming aspects for males when deciding on whether they should become a mentor is building a relationship. Many male volunteers are concerned because they don't know how to do this. Instead of “scaring away” potential male volunteers with the “touchy feely” aspects of mentoring, relate to the mentoring relationship in male terms. Current male mentors suggest that during the recruitment pitch staff should inform volunteers that just “hanging out” and having fun with their mentee will allow them to talk and get to know each other, which will in turn allow them to build a relationship. Staff can do this by encouraging mentors to be active with their mentees and have fun together by participating in activities both the mentor and mentee choose.

***Male mentors like to be active***

It is no secret that most men are interested in sports and staying active. So of course potential male volunteers would be no different. The male respondents noted that encouragement from program staff to be active with their mentees, like shooting hoops, working out together at the gym or even building things together like model airplanes was a great allure while they were deciding on whether or not to become a mentor. When creating your recruitment pitch, make sure you inform all potential male volunteers that activities such as sports are encouraged and will help them in building that (gulp) relationship with their mentee.

Program staff can also develop monthly activities for mentors and mentees to share in with other matches. Miniature golf, outings to see the local sports teams play, and other ACTIVE, FUN activities can be enjoyed by all mentor and mentee matches.

***Utilize your most precious resource: male mentors!***

As illustrated by the large number of males that were interested in participating in the online survey and focus groups, men can be a great asset to your program by promoting the mentoring experience to other males such as family, friends and coworkers.

*“I wanted to help my program recruit more males because I saw how few men volunteered to be mentors. So I invited my buddy to join my mentee and me the next time we met. He had a good time and I hope that one day he will decide to be a mentor also.”*

Male participants noted that they would have liked to talk to other men that participated in the program in order to get their perspective on what it was like being a mentor. Their solution was to include current male mentors into your recruitment strategy so male volunteers can hear about the mentoring experience from the “horses mouth.” Designate a few of your current male mentors to become advocates for your program, train them and have them accompany staff when talking to other potential male volunteers. Not only will they provide a great male presence for your program, they will have an opportunity to extol the act of mentoring.

One caution before enlisting all of your male mentors to become advocates for your program is to have a clear understanding of the type of mentors you would like to recruit. Your current mentors will likely recruit those like themselves, so be careful in choosing males to spread the word about your program.

## *Additional Resources*

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### *About the Authors: Elsy Arévalo and Erika Urbani*

Elsy Arévalo is an experienced trainer with firsthand knowledge of mentoring and effective mentoring practices. She has held key leadership positions in the mentoring field including Director for the Friends for Youth Mentoring Institute, Mentoring Project Director at Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS), Technical Assistance Manager for the EMT Group, and Board Member for the Silicon Valley Mentoring Coalition. Ms. Arévalo has also worked directly with mentors and mentees. As a Program Coordinator and Recruitment Coordinator, Ms. Arévalo recruited, screened, trained, matched, and counseled mentors and mentees through the challenges of building a lifelong friendship. Ms. Arévalo is the author of key mentoring publications such as “Running a Safe and Effective Mentoring Program,” “SAFE: Screening Applicants for Effectiveness,” “Designing and Implementing a Mentor Training” and “Developing and Implementing a Recruitment Plan.” Currently, she works as a presenter at key mentoring conferences and forums, conducts mentoring research, and develops mentoring curricula and training materials. On a personal level, Ms. Arévalo is committed to volunteerism and is actively involved in her community. She has served as a mentor, worked with youth of all ages, assisted the elderly, supported terminally ill patients, and committed a year to the Jesuit Volunteer Corp.

Erika Urbani is the Project Director of the Mentoring Technical Assistance Project at the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS) where she is responsible for implementing and managing technical assistance and training provided to the mentoring field. Ms. Urbani has had over ten years of mentoring experience, both as a mentor and a program director and is familiar with the issues mentoring programs face. She is also very familiar with all facets of prevention. Ms. Urbani has also had over five years of hands-on experience in youth development, coalition building and substance abuse and violence prevention and has developed a rich expertise in the areas of effective prevention strategy development, implementation and evaluation. She also holds a Master’s Degree in Criminal Justice from California State University, Sacramento.

# Mentoring Resource Center

## Case Study Series

**The Mentoring Resource Center (MRC)** has been created to provide United States Department of Education Mentoring Program grantees with training, technical assistance, publications, research, and consultation, all in an effort to help their program staff design and implement the highest quality mentoring programs. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools, the MRC is a collaborative effort between EMT Associates, located in Folsom, CA, and the National Mentoring Center, located in Portland, OR.

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