



## MENTORING NHSC PROVIDERS: AMBASSADOR'S GUIDE

Use this guide to foster the mentoring process and provide structure to the relationship you form with the provider you are guiding. This guide will provide numerous suggestions on topics to cover and will give you a place to start.

### At the Outset

At your first meeting, you can get started by collecting some basic information. You may already have information about the provider; write the information you already have on this sheet and fill in the missing information. Keep in mind that all of the information will not apply to every provider. Keep the sheet with your notes from each session.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Discipline/Specialty: \_\_\_\_\_

Graduate/Health Professional School: \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Graduation: \_\_\_\_\_

Type of Residency/Training: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Employer: \_\_\_\_\_ Year in School: \_\_\_\_\_

Year in Residency/Training: \_\_\_\_\_ Time Spent in Clinical Arena: \_\_\_\_\_

Professional Affiliations: \_\_\_\_\_

Hobbies/Outside Interests: \_\_\_\_\_

### Session One: Core Questions

At the beginning of your relationship, work together to identify your expectations for the exchange.

Topics you may discuss include:

- Your vision of a mentoring relationship
- The areas in which the provider might need particular support

You should also be prepared to answer questions about your own background. Your provider will want to learn what you bring to the relationship.

Listen to your provider's needs and expectations. The most successful mentoring relationships are

piloted by the person seeking guidance. Use these discussion questions to learn about the provider's experiences, anxieties, and needs, and be prepared to respond to any questions.

- What experiences impacted your decision to go into health care?
- When did you first become aware of disparities in health care, and what motivated you to direct your career toward helping to address these issues?
- What do you hope to gain from working in a community with limited access to health care?
- What do you hope you can achieve personally and professionally through this work?



You may be asked many different questions, ranging from the geography of the area where you both work to career goals and the nuts-and-bolts of being an NHSC provider. In your first meeting, be prepared to answer questions such as:

- Is there any NHSC-related paperwork that I need to file with Human Resources?
- What tax forms do I need for deducting my NHSC Scholarship award?
- How does the NHSC keep track of my progress?
- What are the basic clinic procedures?
- Is there a review process at this site?
- What are the unspoken rules of the organization?
- What are the challenges and benefits of working in this particular clinic or community?
- How should I make the most of this opportunity so that it benefits my career?
- How can I best contribute to the team of health practitioners that work here at this facility? How can I be a valued resource?

At the end of the session, determine the communication method that works best for you both for planning future meetings and for informal Q&A.

### Session Two: Prepare to Work in a Culturally Diverse Community

One of the most significant barriers to health care is the cultural divide between patients and their health care providers. Providers sometimes find jobs in communities very different from those they have experienced, and one part of your role as a mentor is preparing them to meet the challenges they might face as a result. In this session, you should learn about the provider's background in community service and discuss the relevance of cultural competency.

The following questions will help you to identify the provider's strengths and weaknesses in areas important for cultural competence:

- What multicultural experiences have you had in the past? How will they be useful at your NHSC-approved site?
- What do you know about this community and the general culture of the population?
- What languages do you speak?
- Do you know of any approaches to patient communication, diagnosis, or treatment that may be pertinent to this community? What are your thoughts about these trends? How might they enhance the services you provide?
- What excites you most about working here? What are you most apprehensive about?

You may be asked questions about the culture and community. You can help the provider become familiar with the region by discussing your experiences. Be prepared to answer questions such as:

- What can I expect when I start working at this site?
- In your experience, how do patients expect us to interact with them?
- What are the most common challenges you find in working with patients at this clinic?
- What are the most common health issues?
- What is the best way to communicate with patients here to deliver health messages and see results in their response to health issues?
- How can I best support my colleagues?
- Did you face any cultural challenges when you first started working in this community? How can I learn from your experiences?



### Session Three: Career Goals

Although NHSC providers are allowed to leave their NHSC-approved site after a minimum of two years, we hope their service experience will prepare them for a challenging and meaningful career as a health care practitioner, and they will continue to offer primary care to communities in need.

Use these questions to discuss the provider's career goals:

- What do you hope to learn from your experience with the NHSC?
- How do you plan to use this experience?
- Where do you see yourself in five to seven years? What steps will you take to get there?
- How will this experience help you to pursue your career goals and identify future opportunities in primary care, especially in communities with a shortage of health professionals?

The provider may ask you to link them with professional contacts in your networks, or inquire about health professional associations that might provide networking opportunities, professional development opportunities, and other resources.

Encourage the provider to learn about the experiences of other providers who have worked in Health Professional Shortage Areas. Providers should also talk to State Primary Care Offices and Primary Care Associations for a different perspective of working with the communities in need. The success stories posted on the NHSC Web site feature the experiences of providers who have pursued careers in communities unfamiliar to them and experienced great personal and professional rewards as a result.



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