

WHAT IDEAS DO YOU HAVE TO IMPLEMENT/FOSTER MENTORING IN THE AAP?

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My first mentor was my father, a pediatrician in private practice in Iowa. Other mentors were clinicians and advisors, who encouraged me during my residency. My friend and career mentor, Dan Plunket, MD, FAAP, demonstrated teaching, clinical, and relationship building skills that have guided me for years. I try to emulate those qualities while mentoring students, residents, young faculty, and pediatricians new to our Tulsa, OK community. Mentoring within the AAP should focus on clinical and business needs of private practices, while fostering alignment between members in private practices and in academics, centering on connecting experienced members with newer members looking for ideas and advice.

A mentor supports another individual or group of individuals as they pursue common goals. Mentoring often is simply leading by example. Good mentors engage others through active listening, encouraging ideas, and by offering suggestions that are designed to support and energize another person. The AAP is a great resource for finding mentors among its many members, and can serve as an organizational mentor by listening to many opinions while guiding members' best ideas into policies and guidelines.

The AAP should continue to engage our trainees and young physicians, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge in medicine, business, policies, and politics. While advocating for children, the AAP supports members in practice settings through email list-servs, task forces, sections and other activities. Providing a way for pediatricians to learn about practice management from experienced and successful practitioners is important. The AAP continues to support senior pediatricians, many of whom can use their practice or academic experiences to mentor a new FAAP entering practice or academics.

The AAP can facilitate the development of mentors through a task force, section or council on mentoring. A task force could design methods for connecting interested members with a mentor in their area of interest. I suggest inviting a young physician to observe committee or section executive committee meetings to connect with leaders who might become mentors. Using new technologies, we can support mentor/mentee pairs across time and space, generating, developing, and reviewing ideas. AAP resources can support mentoring program evaluation and improvement.

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Mentoring is about empowerment. To be a successful mentor, you must have experience in your field and be willing to share your expertise. Training encompasses anything that helps increase the realization of a person's potential. I believe in mentoring members to enable them in their work, and to assist in developing their careers while still meeting personal and family needs.

The work force has changed in pediatrics and many of our new pediatricians are women working part time. To have a successful mentoring program within the AAP, I would encourage chapters to identify willing members who would be available to new members. It would strengthen chapter value. Nationally, it can be done by using social media. Mentoring can happen anywhere and at any time. One person can mentor many people. Mentoring can be as simple as an email, "tweet," or linked-in message. I would promote use of existing services first and add to the AAP Website a "just ask" column that would be answered by volunteer pediatricians chosen by their councils or sections.

Listserves can also be tapped for mentoring. The Section on Practice Management listserv is a classic example of an interactive connection that section members use to exchange ideas and support.

Full mentoring contacts could be developed through the office of membership by request of the individual. Those who request mentors should find chapter administrators and officers also helpful in locating a pediatrician who could serve another pediatrician's need. Participation can be one question or a long term relationship between colleagues, and enrich the lives of both members.

Whether you are in direct patient care or academic medicine, members of the Senior Section locally and nationally hold a treasure of information and are often quite willing to mentor new pediatricians.

We are teachers by virtue of being students first and always. Mentoring colleagues follows our physician oath and should be a natural result of membership in our professional organization. It is with our peers we find our practice voice. The AAP is positioned to be influential in the workplace by developing new ways to mentor members.