



Peer Mentoring as an Onboarding Strategy

Insights to Action is a suite of resources meant to help state and local public health agencies improve recruitment and retention by acting on their data from the Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS). Find more tools like this at <http://debeaumont.org/programs/insights-to-action/>.

Peer mentoring – or matching new hires with existing staff to serve as “mentors” – can help ease new employees’ transition to a new organization. This, in turn, can lead to higher engagement and retention.

Why use peer mentoring?

Improved onboarding: Peer mentors will help new employees acclimate to the organization’s culture and ways of working more quickly than they would on their own. Mentors can also quickly address new hires’ questions or concerns.

Social integration: Connection and belonging are essential to retention, and matching new hires with mentors can facilitate their social integration into the organization. Mentors can help new staff feel welcome and included.

Support: Mentors provide guidance, ask questions, introduce new hires to colleagues, and help them navigate the organization.

Knowledge sharing: Mentors share their experiences and insights as veteran employees, accelerating learning.

The Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS), conducted in 2014, 2017, 2021, and 2024, supports the government public health workforce by measuring strengths and gaps to inform future investments in funding, training, recruitment, and retention.

PHWINS

PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE
INTERESTS AND NEEDS SURVEY

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Leadership skill development: Peer mentors gain valuable leadership and mentorship skills, which will ultimately benefit their own careers.

Positive culture: Mentoring programs positively contribute to organizational culture by encouraging employees to support and include one another.

Improved performance: Peer mentors help accelerate relationship building and knowledge sharing, which can ultimately lead to better performance.

How to implement peer mentoring

Create goals and objectives. Some peer mentoring programs might simply be aiming for participants to feel a sense of belonging after their formal onboarding is complete, whereas others might aim to increase retention or organizational performance overall. Either way, it's important to have a plan.

Determine programmatic details: expectations, cadence, and timeline.

- Onboarding can last one month or one year. How long will your peer mentoring program for new employees be?
- What are the expectations for how often new hires meet with their peer mentors? And when they do meet, what topics will you ask them to discuss?
- Most importantly: what are your expectations of your peer mentors, and how will you communicate those expectations thoroughly and effectively?

Select peer mentors carefully. Peer mentors will serve as ambassadors of the organization. They must be kind and supportive, with the skills, knowledge, and experience needed to guide a new hire through acclimating to the organization.

Provide training and support: Peer mentors will require both initial training and ongoing support to ensure that new hires are supported consistently and effectively throughout the organization.

Evaluate progress: To ensure that a peer mentoring program is having the desired effects, evaluating progress is key. Make an evaluation plan for the program and stick to it.