

## A Guide for Mentors

**Young people who are searching for a career often seek a mentor who can assist them in making career choices.**

### **What is a Mentor?**

Professional mentoring requires two people with a strong commitment to assisting one another. A mentor is a person who brings life experiences with the willingness to share those experiences. As you become a mentor, it is important that you have a firm understanding of what expectations are reasonable.

### **What are the Benefits of Mentoring?**

Deciding what you want from the relationship is a major part of getting what you want. Below is a list of possible reasons for wanting to mentor. As you read the following think about what being a mentor can bring to you:

- Increasing your understanding as well as broadening the use of your personal abilities and skills
- Becoming excited about your job again, opening yourself to possibilities of personal growth
- Becoming more involved in what is going on around you, whether it is at work or in your community
- Continuing with a pattern of personal growth, taking on new challenges, perhaps in a new direction

### **What Makes an Effective Mentor?**

There are some qualities that the best advisors all seem to have in common, they are:

- **Communication.** Listening and asking open-ended questions are two skills that cannot be over-emphasized. Understand that much of what you do to help the person you are mentoring is not going to take the form of telling them the answers; it is going to be helping them find the answers from within and through their own personal experiences.
- **Guidance.** Your position is not to lead, nor to follow, rather it is to provide guidance. The person you are mentoring will need to create his or her own path, just as you did.
- **Honesty.** How much time are you willing and able to devote to mentoring? Be clear about limits. Work with parents as well. **What can you offer?** Information, skills, access to health care facilities...

### **Now What?**

Define what the mentor relationship will be.

Describe the type of assistance they are seeking and what you can provide.

### **Some ideas for getting started.**

Your first meeting is a time for the two of you to get to know each other, and to come to a better understanding of what you have to offer each other. Things you may want to talk about include:

- **How each of you became interested in nursing-** Did you come in through volunteer work, or work in another healthcare profession? What was it that brought both of you to where you are today?
- **What are your aspirations-** Are both of you where you always wanted to be?
- **Spend time getting acquainted**
- **Clarify your goals**
- **Be prepared to explain yourself-** Why you are involved, and your goals regarding what the relationship will be
- **Set the ground rules-** You have an obligation to make sure that you are both clear on the commitments being made:
  - When you will meet
  - Where you will meet
  - Length of the meetings
  - How meetings will be arranged, how far in advance, and the method for communicating these arrangements
  - Decide if there will be an evaluation of activities accomplished between meetings

There are advantages to making these decisions early; it will get your mentoring relationship off to a strong and productive start.