



UNIVERSITY OF
ARKANSAS

College of Education
& Health Professions

EMPOWER

Peer Mentor Handbook

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EMPOWER Program

What is EMPOWER?

EMPOWER is a four year, non-degree program at the University of Arkansas for students with mild intellectual disabilities. Students enrolled within the program attend classes on campus and engage with peers, academics, and campus life. A voluntary peer mentoring program assists the students through campus, academics, and social engagement. EMPOWER is a certificate earning program that prepares students to enter the workforce through on and off campus internship opportunities and social skills building, peer interaction.

Expectations

Students enrolled within the EMPOWER program will complete the program in four years with the skills to actively seek employment, engage with peers in a community setting, and manage their needs and finances (with assistance as needed).

Important Facts

Adaptive Behavior: How the individual adapt to their changing environment. This is an area in which the student must work on improving and often developing these skills.

Person-Centered Planning PCP: This is a planning meeting focused on the persons goals and needs as they navigate the campus and their academic schedule. Similar to an IEP, this PCP meeting is designed to set achievable goals for the individual and ensure that goals are being met or reevaluated as needed each semester.

Circle of Support: Support system designed for and by the EMPOWER student to assist with a variety of topics related to them. This team is comprised of peer mentors, EMPOWER staff, and other individuals as requested by the student.

Self-Advocacy: The ability to advocate for oneself, by standing up, speaking, and taking action on the part of oneself. This is a tool to foster and grow independence in various settings. This can be facilitated though group discussion, and motivation from peers, mentors, family, and EMPOWER staff.

Mentors

What is a mentor

A Peer mentor is many things to the student for whom they are mentoring. Traditionally, a mentor means to be an advisor or support. EMPOWER mentors are that and more. They are a study partner, a confidant, and a friend. Students who choose to become mentors engage with their mentee on a variety of topics as related to the individual. The mentor assist with academics and campus navigation. They provide an outlet for the student to interact with and confide in someone who is their age who is experiencing campus life just as they are.

In short, Peer mentors are;

- Supports
- Academic coaches
- Navigators
- Friends
- Confidants

What a mentor is not

Peer mentoring is a great way to develop community and assist the mentee in developing their social and employment skills. However, there are several responsibility's that do not define what a mentor is. Mentors should be assisting with assignments, **NOT** completing them for the mentee. Mentors are not therapist or counselors. You should not be giving advice that the mentee should seek professional advice for.

You are NOT;

- Therapist
- Counselors
- Teachers
- Parent

Expectations

A peer mentor will be committed to building a one-on-one relationship with the EMPOWER student for whom they are working with. They will be committed to being a part of this student's "circle of support". Peer mentors are asked to commit their semester to the program and fulfill their assigned hours weekly.

Peer mentors will communicate with their mentee and with the EMPOWER team within 48hrs if they are not able to cover their assigned time. Peer mentors will complete weekly evaluations on the progress of lack of for their mentee. In the evaluation, noting things that worked well for them or didn't.

The idea;

- To develop relationships
- Understand what works and what doesn't work for each particular EMPOWER student.
- Help grow the peer mentor program through positive experiences and community outreach.
- Authenticity and Accountability

Responsibilities

Peer mentors are a valuable asset to the EMPOWER program. They help students achieve their personal goals and assist them through the ever changing aspects of university life. There are a few requirements that are laid out for each peer mentor and are considered a part of the peer mentor curriculum.

- Weekly evaluations
- Meeting attendance (twice a semester)
- Weekly communication with EMPOWER staff
- Signed peer mentor contract (located at the end of the handbook)

Confidentiality

Building rapport and trust are key's to a successful mentor mentee relationship. One of the cornerstones of this relationship is confidentiality. This builds trust, integrity, and fosters open dialogue between peers. Understanding who and who you cannot talk to about the conversations and situations of each mentee, is how we build confidentiality agreements.

Have these discussions with;

- EMPOWER staff
- Associated faculty to the program
- Individuals already aware of the topic
- Any applicable authority.

You would not discuss conversation had between you and your mentee, or facets of the mentee with;

- Family or friends
- Other peer mentors
- Other students
- Non-relevant faculty or staff

Appendix

Schedule

EMPOWER Peer Mentor Contract

2018-2019 Academic year

I, _____ (print name), accept a volunteer position as a Peer Mentor for the period beginning **August 20, 2018 and ending December 7, 2018.**

In accepting this appointment, I agree to fulfill all the responsibilities described in the Peer Mentoring contract. Due to the time commitment and dedication required to fulfill the duties of a Peer Mentor, the following terms must be adhered to:

Please read and initial each line:

Professionalism & Peer Mentor Guidelines

_____ I understand that I must commit to being on-campus for the entire academic year (both the fall and spring semesters) and to actively and consistently engage with my mentee(s).

_____ I understand that I have to follow all university policies and procedures while serving as a Peer Mentor.

_____ I understand that I must remain in good academic standing to remain a peer mentor.

_____ I understand that I must check my email/phone and respond to communications from EMPOWER staff and mentee(s) within 48 hours.

_____ I will contact my mentee(s) weekly (via text/email).

_____ I will meet with my mentee(s) on an ongoing basis.

_____ I understand that I have to communicate with EMPOWER staff if I cannot complete an assigned time with my mentee(s).

_____ I understand that I will need to connect my mentee to their peers, faculty, staff, and campus resources as needed.

_____ I understand that I must maintain confidentiality with any information I may receive about my mentee(s).

_____ I understand that I have to complete an assessment form after my allotted time with my mentee(s) to assist EMPOWER staff in monitoring mentees progress.

Peer Mentor (print)

EMPOWER Director (print)

Peer Mentor (signature)

EMPOWER Director (signature)

Date

Date