



NSW Centre for
Road Safety



Guidelines for
community-based
learner driver
mentor programs

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Introduction

Our young drivers are nearly three times more likely than other drivers to be involved in a crash resulting in either injury or death. To help keep our young drivers safe, the Graduated Licensing Scheme now requires new learner drivers in NSW to complete 120 hours of supervised driving before they attempt the test for their Provisional (P1) licence.

Community-based learner driver mentor programs can offer learner drivers the opportunity to meet the requisite hours. The RTA has developed the following guidelines to assist community groups to establish learner driver mentor programs.

These guidelines are specific to mentor programs for participants over the age of 18 years of age, and complement the RTA (2002) *Principles of effective community-based safe driving programs for novice drivers and passengers*.

Before you begin

There are a number of issues to consider before going ahead with a Learner Driver Mentor Program. These issues are:

- Ensuring that there is a need for such a program (assessing the community need).
- Identifying and understanding both the target group (mentees) and the mentors.
- Identifying possible funding sources.
- Ensuring legal and insurance requirements can be met.
- Working with stakeholders.

Assess community need

It is important to assess the need within the community for a learner driver mentor program. To assess the need you should ask the following questions:

- Are there young people over 18 years of age within our community who lack access to a vehicle to do their supervised driving?
- Are there young people over 18 years of age within our community who lack access to a licensed driver as their supervisor?
- Are there people who need a driver licence for employment purposes?

Answers to the following questions will help in assessing the community need.

The questions could be asked of local schools, youth workers, road safety officers, Aboriginal community workers, police, people who work with refugees, and young people in the community.

Specific program requirements would need to be introduced to address the Child Protection Act 1998 if a mentoring program were to target people younger than 18 years of age.

Know your target group

Once you have confirmed that members of your community would benefit from a learner driver mentor program, you can then explore issues pertinent to your target group. This will help in planning the program and recruiting participants. If possible, consult people who work with the target group (e.g. Aboriginal community workers, youth workers, refugee workers, TAFE teachers.)

It would be beneficial to find out:

- The group's special needs.
- Whether or not an interpreter or mentor who speaks particular languages is required.
- The most effective ways to communicate with your mentees.
- If there are other needs for your target group (e.g. assistance in seeking jobs or providing literacy support).

Identify source for mentors

A mentor program will only work if you are able to attract the right group of people as mentors. Some potential sources for mentors could include the community service clubs, driving instructors, retired police or teachers.

Consider placing advertisements or posters in those clubs and at the local council and community centres. Advertise on local radio networks, local newspapers or community-based newsletters.

Identify funding sources

Consider the resources that will be needed to make the program work. In some instances, for example, learner driver mentor programs have worked with local car dealerships as a source of the vehicles.

Explore other possible funding sources such as community grants from the local council, and other funding bodies. Consider working in partnership with other groups, organisations or government departments.

Ensure legislative and insurance requirements are met

There are a number of legislative and insurance requirements that must be met when running a learner driver mentor program.

1. Compliance with the Driving Instructors Act 1992 No. 3

Remember this program is a **mentor** program; it is not to provide instruction. Your mentor will offer supervised driving, giving your mentees opportunity to meet the requisite number of hours of supervised driving in the requisite types of conditions. The mentor program should not be set up so that it would be construed as a driving school.

According to the Act, a **driving instructor** is someone who instructs another person to drive a motor vehicle **and** receives monetary or other reward for the instruction (this reward can be either from the person receiving the instruction or otherwise).

To avoid being construed as a 'driving school' care must be taken to ensure that mentors do not receive monetary reward for participating in the program.

2. Compliance with the RTA Learner Driver Log Book

All driving experience should be recorded in the RTA issued log book.

3. Compulsory Third Party Insurance

All vehicles being used in the program **must** be registered in NSW and **must** have Compulsory Third Party Insurance.

4. Specific program requirements would need to be introduced to address the Child Protection Act 1998 if a mentoring program were to target people younger than 18 years of age.

5. Ensure all mentors undertake a National Criminal History Record Check. This check identifies individuals who have been convicted of a serious offence or offences that have relevance to their capacity to carry out the responsibilities of being a mentor.

Working with stakeholders

Having a community group involved in the program affords a number of benefits.

It can help with:

- Promotion of the program.
- Recruitment of both mentors and mentees.
- Making the program sustainable.

Examples of some community groups to include are: PCYC, TAFE, Centrelink or other training providers, local council, local Rotary, Lions or other community-based clubs.

Program set-up

You have established that it would be feasible to run a learner driver mentor program within your community. You have been able to identify potential mentees, mentors and funding bodies. You have an understanding of the legal and insurance issues associated with the program. Now is the time to develop your plan, work out clearly what you want to achieve and begin recruitment and training of your mentees and mentors.

Develop program objectives

Write a clear statement of what you want to achieve with the program. Include points such as: who the program is for (i.e. be specific about which group you're targeting); what you hope to achieve; how you hope to achieve it and by when.

Previous Learner Driver Mentor programs have had outcomes such as:

- Increased access for disadvantaged youth gaining the required hours of supervised driving experience for a PI licence.
- Increased road safety knowledge by both the youth target group and mentor group.
- PI licence obtained by participating youth.

Develop a program plan

This follows from the objectives of the program. Break each element down to an achievable, measurable point; for example, recruit the number of mentors required through placement of advertisements in local newspaper (name of the paper), speaking at local clubs (identify those), contacting driving instructors, schools, TAFE colleges etc. Use this booklet as a guide to developing your own program plan. (The checklist at the end of the booklet may be particularly useful at this stage).

Develop a code of practice and/or mutual responsibility agreement

A code of practice will help all participants (mentors, mentees and organisers) to have a clear understanding of the roles, responsibilities and expectations of their participation in the learner driver mentor program. It is recommended that both mentees and mentors sign the code of practice once they have either read through it or discussed its contents as an indication of their comprehension and willingness to comply with the code of practice.

Mentor selection and training

Selection

As well as getting potential mentors interested in the program, you will need to set up a process to select those most suited to the role. To do this, consider creating a formal, uniform application process. This will help if you have multiple people handling the recruitment and selection of mentors. When doing this ensure the eligibility criteria meet the program's objectives; for example, work out what the expectation is for their minimum monthly commitment. Additional information that you should consider obtaining includes:

- Character referees.
- Driving record printout (available from RTA Motor Registries) which displays any previous driving offences - a small fee applies.
- National Criminal History Record Check (NCHRC).

Training

Once you have selected your mentors you will need to introduce them to the program. How you do this is up to you but consider including the following in their induction:

- Presentation of the program objectives.
- Clarification of the role of a mentor versus the role of a driving instructor.
- Clarification of the expected level of commitment of time.
- Clarification of the process e.g. mentors and mentees meet at a designated site (not at either's residence).
- Explanation of the special needs of the mentees (e.g. young people of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders background, young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, young people with special needs such as young carers).
- Explanation of what to do in the event of a crash.
- Familiarisation of the mentors with the RTA Road Users' Handbook and the Learner Driver Log Book and how to complete it. Here you could present samples of how to plan the driving experiences while matching the mentee's driving experience with the requirements of the RTA log book.
- Familiarisation of the mentors with the principles of low risk driving. Refer to the *Road Users' Handbook*.

Please note that only personal information necessary for the running of the program will be given out (consider avoiding sharing of personal details such as phone numbers; instead, if the mentor needs to contact the mentee then use the organisers as the go-between).

Also recommended during the induction process of your mentors is to have the mentors participate in a low risk driving skills lesson with a qualified driving instructor to assess the mentor's driving skills and ensure they pass on correct information to the mentees.

All mentors should participate in the *Helping learner drivers become safer drivers* workshop through the local council. These workshops are held in local government areas across New South Wales.

Mentee training

Once you've identified your target group and recruited from within that group, they too need to be inducted into the program. How this is done will depend very much on the nature and special needs of your group. In whatever format, it is still important to make sure that they understand the objectives and their roles and responsibilities in participating in the program. Having both the mentors and mentees sign a code of practice is a good way to show their commitment to the program and to help define roles and responsibilities.

At the induction you could also consider assessing the mentee's driving abilities, knowledge and experiences and exploring their expectations for the program.

Matching mentors with mentees

You have successfully recruited your mentees and mentors. For the program to be successful it is imperative that both mentor and mentee are well matched.

If problems arise, either through a mismatch between mentor and mentee or for other reasons, it is important that all parties involved have a clear understanding of who to turn to so the grievance can be heard and a solution sought.

As the mentors and mentees begin their sessions together they may need help initially to plan the driving experiences and in documenting the nature of the driving experience. This process will become easier as they both become more familiar with it.

Finally, all programs must be monitored so that organisers can easily and quickly identify what is working and what isn't and to ensure that funding requirements are satisfied. It is important that both mentees and mentors have a clear understanding of how monitoring and evaluation will take place and that they consent to being contacted during the program and once they have completed the program.

Source vehicles

Some learner driver mentor programs have experienced difficulties in sourcing vehicles. Some have successfully sourced vehicles from a local car dealership, while others have used the mentor's own vehicles; and others again have used cars owned by local councils or community groups.

When sourcing a vehicle you should consider that, greater safety benefits may be gained with the use of a dual control vehicle.

All programs need to develop guidelines for vehicle use and management.

Plan exit strategy

As with all programs dependent on volunteers, it is important that the planners have procedures for mentees and mentors exiting the program. If there are plans to contact the person in the future (e.g. to conduct evaluation of the program) you should obtain their consent to do so.

Conduct an OHS risk assessment

All programs require an assessment of potential risks. Assessment of the risks should include ways to either eliminate (if possible) or reduce those risks. If an incident occurs all parties should be very clear of what to do immediately as well as what to report, to whom, by when and how to report it.

Issues that could arise include:

- Being involved in a car crash.
- Experiencing a mechanical problem with the vehicle.
- Having a problem with either mentee or mentor or any other issue.

For information refer to the section 'What to do after a crash?' in the *Road Users' Handbook*.

To address potential risks it is important that mentors are aware of the driving conditions and plan driving experiences appropriately; for example, if the learner driver has had limited driving, plan to drive on quiet streets first to become familiar with the vehicle and its boundaries. It is the organisers' responsibility to ensure all vehicles used are registered in NSW and are regularly maintained.

Program running and evaluation

Once the program is up and running, there are several matters to consider which will help maintain the momentum, and enhance the chances of running a successful program. These include offering ongoing support to both mentors and mentees, meeting regularly with the stakeholders and steering committee, and evaluating the program.

Planning on-road driving experiences

From the outset and throughout the program, it is important that mentors and mentees sit down together with the RTA Learner driver log book to plan the driving experiences.

Points to consider include:

- Previous driving experience of the mentee.
- Mentee's available time.
- Mentor's available time.
- Vehicle availability.

Maintaining the log book and other documentation

After each session the Learner Driver Log Book must be filled in. This is also a good time to discuss the driving just finished, explore how the mentee felt about their driving, and also what they would like to focus on next time. It also gives the mentor the opportunity to provide feedback. Fatigue breaks should also be recorded.

Participants will be expected to complete the RTA Learner Driver Log Book. This should be supported by a program driving sheet. Each program will develop their own reporting sheet to suit their needs and objectives.

This should include date, name of supervisor, name of mentee, checks that both are carrying their licence, time out and odometer reading, time return and odometer reading, litres of petrol bought, next booking time and date, incidents and mechanical problems.

Supporting mentees

This will depend very much on the needs of your mentees. Consider addressing the key behavioral issues,

- Speed management.
- Drink driving.
- Occupant restraint.
- Driver fatigue
- Low risk driving

Supporting mentors

To ensure that mentors continue to offer effective driving opportunities to their mentees it is important that there is frequent contact between the program organisers and the mentors. This regular contact offers the opportunity to debrief, to solve problems, to plan future driving experiences and to address other issues.

Depending on the needs of both the mentees and mentors, organisers may consider holding additional sessions on, for example, problem-solving and planning driving experiences. These sessions can serve as a way to bring mentors together to share their experiences. At these sessions there could also be recognition of the mentor's participation in the program. (Recognition of the mentors' work could also take the form of letters of appreciation to the clubs or community groups to which they belong).

As the program develops it would be beneficial to forge relationships with other similar programs and begin a network. This will create opportunities to share experiences and learn other approaches to common problems.

Meeting with stakeholders

It is important to maintain regular communication with key stakeholders of the program and to keep them informed and interested. Similarly, these stakeholders could always offer solutions to any issues that might arise in the day to day running of the Learner Driver Mentor program.

Evaluation from the outset and ongoing

It is essential that all programs are evaluated. This evaluation takes place from day one. You will want to know what is working, what isn't and what changes need to be made as early as possible. Funding bodies will most often require an evaluation to take place to show how their funds have been used and with what results.

To conduct the evaluation you will need to explain to all participants why the evaluation is necessary, what their expected role will be, and how the evaluation will take place.

It is advisable that you obtain permission from the mentors and the mentees to participate in program evaluation both during and after their participation. Elements to include in the evaluation are:

- Number of participants (mentees and mentors).
- Number of drop-outs (mentees and mentors) and their reasons for leaving the program.
- Number of mentees who achieve 120 hours.
- Number of participants who obtain their provisional licence (PI).
- Satisfaction of mentees with the mentor program – questions to ask include: Was there enough time available? Were the driving experiences sufficiently varied?
- Average monthly driving hours (by mentor).
- Satisfaction of mentor's participation in the program.
- Evaluation of any “added value” training sessions.

Keep in mind that results of the evaluation could be used to inform other community groups planning similar programs. Finally, an evaluation of the program could facilitate the process when applying for future or ongoing funding.

Where to go for more information

About driving

Access the Roads and Traffic Authority NSW website (www.rta.nsw.gov.au/)

Follow the links for information on:

- Young and new drivers.
- Licensing.
- Registration.
- Rules and regulations.
- Road safety.
- Publications, statistics and forms.

About setting up community-based programs

RTA (2002) Principles of effective community-based safe driving programs for novice drivers and passengers. RTA/Pub 02/033. – RTA website.

Youthsafe (2004) A guide to consulting with young people when developing youth injury prevention programs. – Youthsafe website. www.youthsafe.org

Checklist for the learner driver mentor program

Before you begin

- Assess community need
- Know your target group
- Identify source for mentors
- Identify funding sources
- Ensure legislative and insurance requirements are met
- Think about how you will work with stakeholders

Program set-up

- Develop program objective
- Develop a program plan
- Develop a code of practice and/or mutual responsibility agreement
- Mentor selection criteria
- Mentor training
- Mentee selection
- Matching the mentors with the mentees
- Source vehicles
- Consider 'extra value'
- Plan exit strategy
- Conduct an OHS risk assessment

Program running and evaluation

- Planning the time – to meet the driving requirements
- Maintaining the log book and other documentation
- Supporting mentees
- Supporting mentors
- Meeting with stakeholders
- Evaluation from the outset and ongoing

Roads and Traffic Authority

The information in this brochure is intended as a guide only and is subject to change at any time without notice. It does not replace the relevant legislation.