

**Provincial Steering Committee for Paediatric Therapists
Web Support for Therapy BC**

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Program: eMentoring program for therapists working in paediatrics

Intent: Provide a structured eMentoring program for therapists with limited experience in paediatrics, new graduates entering paediatric work settings, and therapists working in isolated settings. Provide a program that utilizes the latest technology, has formal guidelines yet allows for flexibility in the mentor-mentee relationship, and has minimal barriers to access.

This proposal has strong links with the recent Cross Ministry Framework for Action developed by the Ministry of Children and Family Development, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Education. In particular, eMentoring addresses strategy #2 of the Framework for Action's "Six Supporting Strategies for Action:"

- #2 - Supporting Our People: Training, recruitment and retention

Rationale: Recruitment and retention of Paediatric Therapists in BC has been identified as a barrier to children accessing services in a timely manner in their local communities. A formal, proven eMentoring program will greatly enhance the ability of agencies to recruit and retain therapists. Agencies will have the confidence that the therapist they are hiring will have the support necessary to excel in their position. Therapists new to the paediatric practice area will have the confidence and support to apply to any job posting available, regardless of the work environment (e.g. – rural, remote, sole-charge, etc.).

Further, BC has a wealth of experienced and highly competent therapists working in paediatrics. Unfortunately, surveys have demonstrated that approximately 1/3 paediatric physiotherapists (PABC, 2007), 1/3 of paediatric speech language pathologists (BCASLPA, 2007), and 1/5 of paediatric occupational therapists (BCSOT, 2008) will be retiring within the next five years. An effective eMentoring program implemented in a timely fashion will help ensure this wealth of knowledge is passed to the next generation of therapists working in paediatrics.

eMentoring is a progressive initiative in the health care environment and has significant potential to improve recruitment and retention. BC has a strong foundation in this area through a research project conducted by a BC paediatric physiotherapist, and through a pilot project of an online eMentor training module delivered through the Sunny Hill Health Centre. The structured yet flexible construct of this eMentoring project builds on this existing solid foundation, and will help to evolve eMentoring in BC to the next level.

Construct:

The Mentor Coordinator: A ‘Mentor Coordinator’ from Sunny Hill Health Centre (Maureen Story) will coordinate the provincial eMentoring project. The coordinator role includes:

1. Recruitment, matching, and support of eMentors The Mentor Coordinator will be available for a bimonthly 1 hour videoconference with the eMentors individually or as a group to help share mentoring experiences and trouble shoot any issues/difficulties with the eMentoring process. A face-to face meeting with individual mentors or the mentoring group may occur if circumstances permit.
2. Developing and facilitating the on-line eMentor training course.
3. Design and implementation of the eMentoring program evaluation.

The eMentor: The eMentor matched to the agency’s therapist will be an experienced paediatric therapist who has undergone the online eMentor training course, and has received additional support and training from the Mentor Coordinator. The eMentors and agency therapist must have access to the technology necessary to participate in the project, and should have access to a range of resources allowing for evidence based practice. The following outlines the required technology and resources necessary:

- Mac with webcam and iChat (a small number of units are available for loan)
- Internet connection (high speed)
- Access to the Electronic Health Library of BC or other database system offering full text journal articles

The general structure of the program will consist of the following:

- Initial meeting between mentor coordinator, mentor and agency therapist to discuss structure and expectations for the mentoring relationship
- Weekly meetings (approx 45 minutes) using Ichat between mentor and agency therapist. The structure and agenda for these meetings will be flexible and based on the needs of the agency therapist.
- Monthly shared case conferences (approx 2 hours) if appropriate

Cost Structure:

This program operates on a cost recovery basis, and there are two separate beneficiaries of funds associated with the eMentoring project. First, funds are necessary to compensate the Mentor Coordinator for their time involved in the recruitment, matching, and training of eMentors. The Mentor Coordinator also requires compensation for time spent in the evaluation process, and for ongoing support of the eMentors.

Mentor Coordinator fees:

- Training and evaluation of the eMentor
\$550 one time cost
- Videoconferencing eMentor support by the Mentor Coordinator
20 minutes once per week for first month = \$73
30 minutes twice a month for next 11 months = \$605
- 12 non-contact hours for other Mentor Coordinator related activities = \$660

Total annual Mentor Coordinator fees: \$1,888

The second beneficiary of funds associated with the eMentoring project is the eMentor. The eMentor will be an experienced and knowledgeable paediatric therapist with the skills necessary to be an effective mentor. If the employing agency of the eMentor supports their involvement in the project and allows the eMentor to perform their mentor duties on work time, then the employing agency shall directly receive the compensation. If the eMentor performs their mentor duties during their own personal time then the eMentor will received the compensation directly.

eMentor fees:

- Funds made available to each eMentor's facility (if done on work time) or to each eMentor (if done outside of work hours) for 6 hours of service per month (4 hours direct contact, 2 hours of non-contact related activities) = \$3,600 annually

*Some agencies may feel it beneficial to have the eMentor travel to the therapist's agency in order to learn more about the culture and work setting. This type of meeting is encouraged; however, costs associated with such meetings are not included within this proposal's budget.

Total annual eMentor fees: \$3,600

Total cost of providing an eMentor for a therapist working at your agency for a period of one year: **\$5,488**

Reference:

(Stewart, 2009) Electronic Mentoring: An innovative approach to providing clinical support. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*. Vol.16, No. 4, 199-206

Further questions regarding this project can be directed to Maureen Story of Sunny Hill Health Centre for Children at mstory@cw.bc.ca