Train and Support: Plan a volunteer training session.

You need to plan the next training for your volunteers. Your goal is to design a session that addresses some difficult situations that volunteers have been encountering.

For this activity:

1. You have two choices for who you plan your training session for:

    A. Read the handout, "The Situation," that outlines the training needs of a youth mentor program.

    OR

    B. Chose an organization that someone in the group is familiar with.   Identify the challenging situations facing the volunteers that need to be addressed. Design a training that responds to these situations.

    2. Use the materials in "Four Fundamental Types of Workshops" and
     "Learning Activities and Active Learning Strategies" to help you to outline a training that responds to the stated concerns.

    3. Be prepared to present an 1 – 2 minute overview of your training outline to the large group (you do not need to go into detail) and to explain the choices you made. Include in your report out:
        - Why you chose the activities you did. What was the thinking behind the choices your group made?

Materials:

- o "The Situation"
- o "Four Fundamental Types of Workshops"
- o "Active Learning Strategies"
- o "Trends Impacting Volunteer Programs"
- o Planning chart for a training program

The Training Situation

Your volunteers are mentors who have been in place four months. Before they were matched, they participated in a two-day orientation/training. During the orientation the following topics were discussed:

• What is mentoring?
• Identification of appropriate mentoring roles
• Expectations –time commitment, communication with Stepping Stones staff
• Exploration of values that help and hinder mentoring situations
• How to avoid common mentoring pitfalls.

Since then, you have held a few additional training and mentor reflection events, addressing topics such as the struggles of immigrant families in this community and educational challenges for English language learners. You called on local experts to deliver these trainings and together, you worked hard to make them experiential-- connecting to the prior experiences of the participants while giving people a chance to interact and listen to each other's ideas.

The feedback from all your events has been positive.

Recently, several issues have come up that center around how to effectively respond to and communicate with mentees. As you've been monitoring the matches, here's some of what you've heard:

o   One mentor was distressed because her mentee used a lot of inappropriate language. The mentor took it personally and responded with words that she later regretted.

o   Another mentor is concerned that his conversations are always "one-way." He works hard to ask lots of questions and be interested in his mentee, but he can barely get eye-contact and more than 3 word responses out of his mentee. He's wondering if his mentee is depressed.

o   A few mentors are discouraged that their mentees resist doing the academic enrichment or homework help activities the program recommends. They say they want to do "more fun stuff." These mentors aren't sure what to do or say to their mentees.

Four Fundamental Types of Workshop Learning Activities

When designing a workshop, it is often helpful to use different types of activities that will meet the needs of participants with different learning styles and, when presented together, will provide a complete learning experience:

Reflecting on Experience activities encourage workshop participants to look back on their own personal or professional behavior in a way that prepares them for new learning and change. To design a reflecting activity, it is important to identify the past experience that you want to invoke. A simple and adaptable reflecting activity is to have participants break into pairs and briefly answer questions about their past experience related to the topic.

Assimilating and Conceptualizing activities are used to provide workshop participants with new information. To design assimilating and conceptualizing activities, you need to decide on the content that is most important to teach and to present this is a dynamic and comprehensible manner. Demonstrations, questionnaires and brief lectures are frequently used to encourage assimilation in workshops.

Experimenting and Practicing activities encourage participants to use knowledge in a practical way. These activities provide an opportunity for participants to practice and involve themselves in new behaviors and skills. The workshop can provide participants a safe environment in which to try out new things before putting them into practice in the "real world." Role plays are commonly used as experimenting activities in workshops.

Planning for Application activities provide a stimulus for implementing and utilizing new learning outside the workshop context. To design planning activities, it is important to identify ways to have participants look toward the future and identify specific ways to put new learning into practice. One way to do this is to have each participant complete an action plan at the conclusion of a workshop.

Active Learning Strategies

Learning Stations
Set up active learning stations where participants can work independently to complete a designated task. Participants can rotate through the stations in groups or individually.

Representing through Art
Participants represent their thoughts, reflections, ideas, or responses through art. Any medium is appropriate.

Where Do You Stand?
Present participants with an issue that could have several options for a response. Physical locations of the room are assigned a response. Participants then go to the location that best suits their response. Participants should also position themselves along a continuum indicating the degree to which they agree or disagree with an issue.

Real-life Dilemmas
Participants are broken into small groups and provided with realistic scenarios. The group discusses potential strategies and solutions for approaching the problem.

Simulations & Role Plays
Participants assume the roles and voices of others.

Walk and Talk
Present an issue or problem to the larger group. Instead of pairing or grouping participants, invite them to just sit and discuss the issue or problem, giving them permission to get up and leave the training/workshop room in order to "walk and talk" about the issue. When they return refreshed and energized after a designated period of time, invite them to share their insights with the larger group.

Fishbowl
Have a small group discuss or complete a task in the middle of a circle created by the larger group. When the small group completes the assigned task, the larger group discusses or reflects upon their work/task.

Kinesthetic Activities
In order to reinforce certain topics, have participants involve themselves by illustrating the concept. For example, have participants graph, classify, and seriate themselves when introducing cognitive skills.

Whip
Ask an open-ended question related to a topic and go around the entire group with everyone providing a response: "what is one way we can improve child care in the country?"

Trends Impacting Volunteer Programs

Time scarcity

Time scarcity is the number one barrier to effectively recruiting and retaining volunteers. People are working longer hours at paid jobs or working two jobs to make ends meet, overscheduling activities for their children and themselves, caring for older parents or raising grandchildren, or spending hours on e-mail and Web sites. As a result, more and more individuals are seeking volunteer opportunities that are project-oriented and short-term in duration. These volunteers are often identified as *short-term* or *episodic volunteers*.

Today, the average volunteer will give 52 hours a year. In a 2005 report, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics says that 10% of Americans do most of the volunteer work and those who give more than 100 hours a year account for over 80% of the volunteer hours!

Many organizations have volunteer opportunities and marketing materials that are still geared only for the long-term volunteer. Organizations need to develop marketing materials and expand opportunities for episodic volunteers that offer:

- Flexible hours and schedules.

- Well-defined jobs with task descriptions that are broken into several smaller ones so that the work can be shared.

- Opportunities for individuals to volunteer with their children as a family activity, rather than having to make the choice of spending even less time parenting.

- Streamlined requirements that reduce the volunteer's time spent in orientation and training by utilizing technology including e-mail discussion lists, chat rooms, video conferencing, conference calls, and more.

- Assurances that their time will not be wasted by extraneous requirements and meetings.

- A chance to learn something new while volunteering.

- An opportunity to have fun. Time-deprived folks need a recreational outlet. It is possible to do hard work and still have fun!

Changing expectations

VISTAs and agency staff need to be prepared to supervise and support volunteers of all ages—possibly six or more generations. Each generation of volunteers has its own unique patterns of living, thinking and interpreting information, which can be a real challenge for any manager!

Seniors – The Greatest Generation

Many seniors have been volunteering for an organization or cause for years—possibly for decades. They take great pride in the organization and may consider it "theirs." They feel they have the perspective to know what is best for the group. Often they founded specific projects within programs and do not want anyone "tampering" with their project. They prefer uniformity, conformity, and order. They will often take leadership roles and are comfortable making commitments and working as part of a team.

Many organizations depend heavily on these individuals to sustain their volunteer programs. They are, however, aging out of their volunteer jobs. Organizations are looking to the Boomers to fill the gap, but they may not be ready for this next wave of potential volunteers.

Boomers

Boomers will be a new breed of retiree: younger, healthier, better educated, and interested in travel, personal development, and education. They will expect choice, flexibility, accountability, and meaningful volunteer work. When they retire, they are often working at least part-time, either by choice or by necessity. When they use what free time is left, volunteering is not what always comes to mind. Boomers want to pick up a volunteer job, enjoy it, feel good about it, and then leave it behind.

Youth

Younger volunteers are comfortable working alone or in virtual teams. They embrace technology and see it as a way to connect to a global society. They want colleagues who will develop relationships that build intimacy and show trust and respect for them—their abilities and ideas. They do not view age, seniority, and rank as measures of accomplishment or expertise.

Generation X

"Generation X" refers to people born between 1965 and 1981. Many Gen Xers grew up as "latchkey kids" (raised by a divorced/single parent or both parents worked and/or furthered their education). As they came of age, Gen Xers witnessed limited economic prospects (corporate downsizing, inflation) and social crises (AIDS, crack, tripled divorce rate). Many are college educated and are not afraid of changing careers. In 2006, 30% of Gen Xers did volunteer work.

Millennials

"Millennials" refers to the generation born between 1981 and 2000 that is growing up with personal computers, cell phones and the Internet, and where the only constant is rapid change; however, they are generally happy with their lives and optimistic about the future. They are close to their families and are not as distrustful of government as Generation X. Although in 2006 only 17% of people aged 20 – 24 volunteered, many millennials grew up in communities where doing service was part of their public education.

Training Planning Chart

Time	Activity	Materials