

# EARLY CAREER MENTORING FACT SHEET

## WHAT IS MENTORING?

Mentoring is a reciprocal relationship between a usually more experienced professional (a mentor) who guides, coaches, supports a less experienced professional (a mentee), within an area of shared learning.

Mentoring is generally tailored to support a mentees professional growth and performance needs.

Mentoring may take place in 1-1, peer or group settings. It can be face to face or remote via phone or videoconference.

Within a mentoring partnership, a mentee and mentor work together to set goals around particular areas of need and/or interest including:

- Career planning and development
- Career pathways and opportunities
- Professional development or CPD planning
- General concepts such as clinical reasoning or evidence-based practice or professional identity;
- Professional resilience or;
- Transition into a different practice domain.

## Why engage in mentoring?

For mentors, the [AHPRA Code of Conduct \(2022\)](#), stipulates that “teaching, supervising and mentoring practitioners (and students) is important for the development of practitioners and for the care of patients or clients. It is part of good practice to contribute to these activities, and provide support, assessment, feedback and supervision for colleagues”.

For mentees, increasingly, mentoring is seen as a component of formal professional development programs. The literature supports the theory that mentoring is beneficial at all stages of a professional career.

*Occupational Therapy Australia recommend practitioners have a range of professional development strategies in place to support their journey as Occupational Therapists. One of these strategies is mentoring.*



## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF MENTORING?

### MENTORING CAN HAVE SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS FOR BOTH MENTORS AND MENTEES

For mentees some of the benefits can include:

- The development of professional direction through encouragement and assistance in career planning;
- Improvement in job satisfaction;
- Development of a sense of professional connection/belonging
- Growth of professional networks;
- Development of insight into strengths and weaknesses;
- Increased socialisation into the profession (for new graduates and those returning to the workforce)
- Recognition and positive reinforcement;
- Practical help, support and the opportunity for personal growth;
- Development of reflective thinking and practice skills;
- The discovery of hidden talents, skills and interests.



For a mentor, benefits can include:

- An increase in job satisfaction, re-assessment of professional goals & personal growth;
- Development of new networks;
- Opportunities to develop systematic ways to examine and reflect on own practice;
- Increased energy and interest in work;
- An opportunity for interactive professional development.
- An opportunity to keep in touch with the emerging profession.



## HOW DOES MENTORING DIFFER FROM CLINICAL SUPERVISION?

Mentoring and supervision differ on a number of levels. Professional supervision is a formal process providing professional support and learning for occupational therapy practitioners (supervisees). It fosters the development of knowledge, competence, and a sense of responsibility for one's practice, ensuring public protection and safety (Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, 2014, p.2). Grounded in principles including reflective practice, self-directed learning, and critical feedback, professional supervision empowers supervisees to take control of their own learning and development, and provides a platform for self-directed growth, skill development, problem solving and wellbeing. Quality supervision is vital for upholding service excellence, client safety, and ethical care.

Essentially, mentoring is about a mentee exploring who they are as an occupational therapist, where they would like to go in their career and how they would like to develop, rather than specifically about the work they are currently doing. A mentoring relationship considers the broader questions and issues of what is being learnt and developed by the mentee, making sense of this and how it is moving them forward in their professional life. A mentor is not a formal supervisor or manager. Mentoring can provide career guidance, increase job satisfaction, and increase the mentees feeling of empowerment. Mentoring can also be a valuable tool to foster career advancement.



## GETTING STARTED WITH MENTORING

### How can I find a mentor?

Here are some ideas to try:

- Utilize your own professional networks and consider approaching a practitioner you respect and trust to see if they may be interested in a mentoring partnership;
- Join other communities of practice or groups e.g. Interest Groups;
- The OT Australia [Find an OT](#) listing may help identify some OTs in your geographical location/area of practice who may potentially be interested in a mentoring partnership. This may require approaching each individual directly.
- Think of approaching previous colleagues or managers and exploring the potential for a mentoring partnership

### How do I set up a good mentoring relationship?

OTA has a Mentoring Workbook that is available to OTA members found [here](#). It contains a wealth of information, resources and tips to help you on your mentoring journey.

### Can mentoring be claimed as Ahpra CPD?

Both mentors and mentees are potentially able to claim mentoring time as continuing professional development hours. You can refer to the [Occupational Therapy Board of Australia Guidelines: Continuing Professional Development \(2019\)](#), for more information on this.

