M4PRIS

PEER MENTORING PROGRAMME FOR PRISON STAFF

Mentoring Program for Mentoring Coordinators

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Introduction

The Peer Mentoring Coordinator Programme for Prison Staff was developed under the M4Pris project: Peer Mentoring Programme for Prison Staff (2022-1-DK01-KA220-VET-000086675), an Erasmus+ initiative. This program leverages a multidisciplinary partnership involving organizations from Denmark, Portugal, Romania, Greece, and Belgium. It aims to enhance prison staff well-being and professional development through peer mentoring.

Building on the **Blueprint of Prison Staff Mentoring**, this program outlines a structured approach to mentoring, specifically tailored to the unique challenges of the correctional environment. Mentor coordinators play a pivotal role in ensuring the programme's success by supporting mentors, overseeing mentor-mentee relationships, and fostering a positive mentoring culture.

Purpose and target audience

This training course is specifically designed for **mentor coordinators**, who are responsible for recruiting, training, supporting, and monitoring mentors and mentees within the program. As key drivers of the program's success, mentor coordinators ensure that mentoring relationships align with the goals of improving occupational well-being, reducing stress, and enhancing professional competencies among correctional staff.

Program objectives

At the end of this training, provided by the program, mentor coordinators will be equipped to:

1. Understand and execute the core responsibilities of a mentor coordinator.
2. Recognize and address burnout and stress among prison staff.
3. Develop strategies for effective mentor-mentee pairing and relationship management.
4. Facilitate communication, conflict resolution, and stress management.
5. Promote well-being and a supportive workplace culture in correctional settings.

The Role of mentoring in correctional environments

Prison staff face unique challenges, including high job demands, complex interpersonal dynamics, and exposure to potentially traumatic events (Ricciardelli, et al., 2020; Fusco, et al., 2021; Johnston, et al., 2022; Norman & Ricciardelli, 2022). Mentoring offers both psychosocial and career-oriented support to mitigate these challenges (Farnese, et al., 2016; Dugan, et al., 2022; Kotejoshver, et al., 2021).

Key benefits of mentoring:

- **Psychosocial support:** Enhancing emotional resilience, motivation, and interpersonal skills.
- **Career-oriented support:** Building job-related knowledge and skills, facilitating workplace integration, and fostering long-term commitment.

Mentoring is particularly impactful for **newcomers** or those transitioning to new prison environments, offering a buffer against burnout and disengagement while fostering a sense of belonging and professional growth.

Training methodology

The mentor coordinator training uses a **blended-learning approach** combining asynchronous (self-paced) and synchronous (interactive) sessions. Participants will engage through:

- **Expository learning:** Presentations and conceptual overviews.
- **Interactive discussions:** Q&A sessions, debates, and case studies.
- **Practical activities:** Role-play, group exercises, and scenario-based training.
- **Hands-on techniques:** Use of monitoring tools, feedback mechanisms, and crisis intervention strategies.

Course structure

The training course is divided into **six modules**, combining theoretical insights and practical applications:

Module 1: Mentorship Fundamentals

- **Topics:** Mentor coordinator roles, mentorship program structure, fostering mentor-mentee relationships.
- **Delivery:** 2 hours synchronous, 2 hours asynchronous.

Module 2: Communication Skills

- **Topics:** Active listening, OARS and ACR techniques, conflict resolution, non-verbal communication.
- **Delivery:** 2 hours synchronous, 1 hour asynchronous.

Module 3: Mentor Matching

- **Topics:** Criteria for effective pairing, guidelines for initial meetings, monitoring phases.
- **Delivery:** 2 hours synchronous, 1 hour asynchronous.

Module 4: Monitoring Mentoring Relationships

- **Topics:** Effective monitoring strategies, addressing challenges, enhancing engagement.
- **Delivery:** 1 hour synchronous, 1 hour asynchronous.

Module 5: Crisis Intervention

- **Topics:** Roberts' Seven-Stage Crisis Model, strategies for addressing mentorship challenges.
- **Delivery:** 2 hours synchronous, 1 hour asynchronous.

Module 6: Self-Care & Wellbeing

- **Topics:** Stress management, promoting well-being, preventing burnout.
- **Delivery:** 1 hour synchronous, 1 hour asynchronous.

Total Course load: 17 hours (10 synchronous, 7 asynchronous).

Learning outcomes

Participants will:

1. Develop core competencies to manage and support mentor-mentee relationships.
2. Address occupational stress and promote mental health among prison staff.
3. Facilitate effective communication and conflict resolution within mentoring dynamics.
4. Handle crises with resilience and maintain program integrity.
5. Build a sustainable mentoring culture that promotes continuous learning and development.

Evaluation and assessment

The program's impact will be assessed through:

1. **Effectiveness evaluation:** Pre- and post-training assessments to measure changes in participants' skills and knowledge.
2. **Satisfaction surveys:** Feedback from participants on training content, methodology, and overall experience.
3. **Programme monitoring:** Evaluation of mentorship outcomes, including reduced stress (Assessment Tool: 4LessBurnout), improved well-being (14-item WEMWBS scale: 14-item WEMWBS scale), and enhanced organizational commitment among prison staff.

Mentor Coordinator's Role

Mentor coordinators act as pivotal links between the mentoring framework and its implementation, overseeing the following responsibilities:

- **Recruitment and selection:** Identifying and screening potential mentors based on their experience, motivation, and interpersonal skills.
- **Training and support:** Providing comprehensive training to mentors and ensuring continuous support throughout the mentoring process.
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** Regularly assessing mentorship relationships, addressing challenges, and implementing feedback for continuous improvement.

Conclusion

The **Mentor Coordinator training** program empowers participants with the tools and insights necessary to foster an impactful mentoring environment in correctional settings. By integrating psychosocial and career-oriented support, this program contributes to a healthier, more committed, and resilient workforce within prison systems.

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