

## Mentor Teacher Quick Fact Sheet

The term Mentor Teacher is used by the California Early Childhood Mentor Program to describe an experienced early childhood education teacher of infants, toddlers, preschoolers or before and after-school age children who has applied and been selected by their local Mentor Program. The California Early Childhood Mentor Program, funded by the California Department of Social Services, works with nearly 100 community colleges across California. Those colleges, either individually, or working together in regional groupings, invite early childhood leaders from their community to serve on a Mentor Program Selection Committee. Each Selection Committee uses the guidelines of the California Early Childhood Mentor Program to review applications, meet with applicants, and select Mentor Teachers from a variety of child care settings, including publicly and privately funded centers and family child care programs (FCC).

\*For ease of definition "classroom" includes the ECE setting

### What does a Mentor Teacher do?

A Mentor Teacher accepts student teachers into their classroom or family care center for practicum experience. The Mentor provides a unique one-on-one learning relationship with the student teacher in the practical aspects of both working with young children and acting as a leader and advocate for the child care profession. The Mentor Teacher is responsible for guiding a student teacher during all of the laboratory hours required by the practicum course. That means being in the classroom whenever the student teacher is present and meeting with the student teacher weekly to answer the student's questions and discuss Early Childhood Education concepts. Although a Mentor Teacher may work with several student teachers during a semester, only one student teacher may be present in the Mentor Teacher's classroom at a time.

### What are the Rewards?

The Mentor Teacher receives a stipend for each student placed in their classroom. The stipend amount depends on the number of hours the student teacher spends in the classroom as a requirement of their practicum course. Mentor Teachers also receive stipends for supporting ECE students in successfully completing their full ECE course of study. In addition to receiving stipends for working with students, Mentor Teachers may earn stipends mentoring those who have completed practicum courses and in selected settings. Mentor Teachers are also supported for their professional development activities through a Mentor In-Service Training Component. Mentor Teachers from all placement sites meet regularly, for eight 2-hour sessions or a minimum of 16 hours for each fiscal year, in a seminar format. Mentor Seminars combine informal discussion and peer support with more formalized training in supervision strategies, leadership and advocacy skills. Mentor Teachers receive a stipend for participation in In-Service Training.

### How do I become a Mentor Teacher?

#### Step 1. Meet the minimum qualifications:

- No fewer than three years of experience teaching in an ECE environment (experience need not be all in one setting)

- Current employment in an ECE site with no fewer than three hours per day, five days per week spent with the same group of children (for full time programs)
- Completion of a degree or certificate in Early Childhood Education, including at least one course in supervised student teaching
- Eligibility for the Master Teacher Level, or higher, of the California Child Development Permit Matrix
- Completion of an Adult Supervision (Mentor Teacher) course
- Submission of an appropriate most current Environment Rating Scale (e.g., ECERS, ITTERS, FCCERS) on the applicant's site or classroom in preparation to discuss with Selection Committee members. There are no exceptions to these minimum standards.

**Step 2.** Apply to your local Mentor Program.

To do so, contact your local Mentor Program Coordinator by visiting the "Our Colleges" tab on the California Early Childhood Mentor Program website, request an application, and submit that application to the Coordinator.

Your completed application packet will include:

- Application to Become a Mentor
- Official transcripts of all Early Childhood or Child Development coursework
- Two (2) letters of recommendation from Early Childhood professionals who can attest to the quality of your teaching and classroom supervision skills
- One (1) letter of recommendation from a parent/guardian who can attest to the quality of your teaching and classroom supervision skills
- Statement whether your site has been rated for QRIS and if so, what Tier Rating Score it received

Your written application, references, transcripts, Environment Rating Scale, and other supporting materials will be reviewed by the Coordinator and a team of two Selection Committee members. If these materials present you as a viable candidate for a Mentor Teacher, you will proceed to Step 3 below.

**Step 3.** Cooperate in the scheduling of two Selection Committee members to visit your site and conduct an appropriate Environment Rating Scale (e.g., ECERS, ITTERS, FCCERS) in your classroom.

Following Steps 1, 2 & 3, the local Selection Committee will meet to determine selection. Selection Committees may also establish priorities based on program and community needs, such as cultural representation by programs of different types (family child care, corporate, or publicly-funded child care, etc.), need for bilingual Mentors Teachers, or need for Mentor Teachers with particular areas of expertise.

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**Am I eligible to be a Mentor if I work in a campus lab school?** Yes, but there are restrictions. Lab teachers may not be certified CECMP Mentors if their job descriptions already include the word/descriptor mentoring of student teachers. There is an exception to this rule in cases where hours of pre-existing mentoring duties are blocked out (e.g., T-Th 9-12 or summer excluded), and student placements with the Mentor are outside this schedule. Also, given that one of the original missions of the Mentor Program was to reach out to the community beyond college lab school programs, a requirement for all programs is that no greater than 20% of Mentors may be campus lab school teachers.

**Am I eligible to be a Mentor if I work with school-aged children in extended day care?**

Yes, as long as all minimum qualifications are met and local training institutions are willing to place students in your site for their practicum experience. Public school transitional kindergarten teachers, however, are not eligible to become Mentors in this program.

**Can I be a Mentor if I am a Director?** Yes, as long as you are written into the schedule and actually spend a minimum of three hours per day, five days per week with the same group of children (for full time programs) in a teaching capacity.

**Do I need to inform my Director when I apply to become a Mentor?** Yes. Your Director must sign your application form, indicating that they approves of your potential role of mentoring students in your classroom.

**How does my program benefit from my role as a Mentor?** As a Mentor, you are provided with incentives that can increase not only your tenure at the worksite but the tenure of others by providing training options for staff at their worksite. In addition, you provide prestige to your child care setting as a placement site for your local community college or ROP training program. Your program director may also use your professional efforts as a Mentor to promote your program as a model in the community. By allowing you to become a Mentor, your director also gains a higher priority should she or he wish to apply to become a Director Mentor.

For Further Information, Contact:

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