



### **MC Mentoring Outpost Introduction**

When MentorCONNECT members express interest in forming outposts in their local community, MentorCONNECT leadership maintains an enthusiastic stance of encouragement and support.

If you are considering starting a local MentorCONNECT Mentoring Outpost, this brief overview is designed to give you ideas to think about and incorporate where appropriate into your vision for how your Mentoring Outpost can serve to:

- A. Strengthen you in your own recovery journey
- B. Bring a message of hope and pro-recovery support to others in your local area

### **MentorCONNECT's Mission & Vision**

Our shared **Vision** as participating MentorCONNECT leaders and members is to provide individuals with the means to “break through the isolation of eating disorders by sharing the tools of recovery in supporting relationships.”

We accomplish this shared **Mission** by “connecting members individually and in groups with mentors to share experiences, provide guidance, and help each other through the struggles and triumphs of our journeys.”

Every activity a MentorCONNECT member undertakes must strive to remember that, first and foremost, our very survival depends upon our willingness and ability to create and maintain a strong pro-recovery support network that we can all benefit from.

### **How MentorCONNECT Works – Online & Offline**

**MentorCONNECT Online:** exists to foster confidential, nurturing, mutually supportive pro-recovery relationships in a safe and private online setting

**MentorCONNECT Offline:** focuses on supporting MC members who want to take their positive experiences with the pro-recovery principles and practices of MentorCONNECT online back into their local communities

**MentorCONNECT Online + MentorCONNECT Offline => STRONG RECOVERY PROGRESS**



**7 Universal Pro-Recovery Principles**

**for Presenting MentorCONNECT in an Outpost Setting**



## **7 Universal Pro-Recovery Principles**

These 7 universal pro-recovery principles will stand any MC Mentoring Outpost leader in good stead when presenting the positive pro-recovery principles and practices of MentorCONNECT Online in an outpost setting.

### **Principle #1: *Confidentiality is our Golden Rule***

As members of MC, we must always remember and exemplify the Golden Rule of Confidentiality – do and say unto others as we would have others do and say unto us. Readiness for upholding confidentiality is a reliable sign of readiness for recovery.

### **In Public and in Private, Safe People + Safe Spaces = RECOVERY PROGRESS**

### **Principle #2: *MC for All, All for MC, or why we are just like the Musketeers***

We must always remember what we felt like when the eating disorder was our only companion. It was so scary! So lonely! So hopeless!

Newbies coming into MentorCONNECT both online and offline often feel the same way. They need our support, guidance, and warm welcome to feel at home, learn the ropes of pro-recovery, STAY, and GET BETTER.

As each member of our community gets stronger in pro-recovery talking and walking, we all get stronger. In other words, all for one, and one for all!

### **Principle #3: *In MC, we put our own oxygen mask on first, and then we assist our neighbors with their masks***

Or, as St. Francis of Assisi was fond of saying: “Preach the gospel ceaselessly. If necessary use words.”

It can be tempting to want to skip over some of the grueling work of our own recovery to reach out and help our neighbors. We see that they are struggling. We know how painful it is to live inside their skin. We want to help.

But our neighbors are not listening to our words – they are watching the example we set.

Before starting a MC Mentoring Outpost, which can come with a great deal of responsibility and a possibility of some amount of natural stress, ask yourself if you are ready not just with your words but with your actions of strong, sustained, recovery progress to take on a leadership position.

If the answer is ‘yes’, then by all means go for it! But if the answer is ‘no’, then we warmly encourage you to wait a bit, or to invite a friend who is a bit stronger in their recovery to help out!



**Principle #4:** *Just say no to “recovery celebrities”*

It is great to be able to achieve strong recovery and have the chance to pay it forward by mentoring others. It is an equally awesome privilege to be able to serve as a role model for others who are still struggling through the recovery process.

But MC leaders never allow ourselves or others to glamorize our recovery success to the detriment of recovery progress. We also don't allow ourselves to become swayed or distracted from maintaining our shared focus on recovery when others choose to erect their own pedestals in our midst.

Rather, as MC leaders we are charged to continually and humbly remind ourselves and others that if I could overcome my eating disorder, you can too.

It is great to stand out, to be recognized for our recovery-oriented accomplishments, to write a book or blog, start a speaking tour, lead a group, record a CD, or otherwise SHINE. It is equally great to celebrate others for the same.

But when considering launching a Mentoring Outpost, remember that MC is not the special community we are because of who we are and what we can accomplish as individuals or even as leaders. MC is special because of who we are and what we can accomplish together.

**Principle #5:** *MentorCONNECT operates independently and free of affiliations*

When you start your Mentoring Outpost, other local agencies, organizations, and businesses may be interested and want to participate.

MC Outpost participants may decide to organize a charity walk together, start a meal support group, participate in yoga or meditation classes as a group, and engage in service work.

This is great!

However, MentorCONNECT Outposts and activities must operate independently and free from affiliations at all times.

This means that other organizations who wish to participate with or even partner with a local Mentoring Outpost for community outreach must not be permitted to in any way influence, interrupt, or otherwise interfere with a Mentoring Outpost's ability to operate in accord with MentorCONNECT's pro-recovery policies and practices.

**Independent + Unaffiliated = Integrity in MC Operations**



**Principle #6:** *Just as you are unique, so your Outpost will be unique...but not too unique!*

You have your own unique recovery story. Certain tools and techniques worked better for you than others in helping you get to where you are today. Maybe you loved meal support but hated journaling, or loved yoga but never grasped the point of art therapy.

Pick and choose what works for your group and leave the rest. But don't forget to consider new ideas as newcomers join in your activities. What may not have worked for you in your personal recovery journey may be the golden ticket for someone else in theirs.

Also remember that your community will be of great value in helping you find the right blend of services and activities to meet their needs. In fact, that is how MentorCONNECT Online came to be what it is today – because of feedback from members just like YOU. You have the same exciting potential to learn from your own local community as your Mentoring Outpost develops!

**Principle #7:** *Always ask for help!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*

Maybe you have experience starting a local outreach and support program. Maybe you are brand new. Either way, you are almost certain to have questions as your MC Mentoring Outpost gets underway.

We want to hear from you and support you in any way that we can. Never feel shy or afraid to call on us for feedback or ideas. We are also happy to invite you to download any literature or information on the MentorCONNECT website that may be helpful to you in sharing more about pro-recovery and mentoring in your local community.

**Helping Others + Asking for Help = A SUCCESSFUL MC MENTORING OUTPOST**



**MentorCONNECT Offline  
(MC Mentoring Outposts)**

**Minors, Money & Mentoring**



### **Minors & MentorCONNECT Offline**

Mentoring Outpost activities that are open to minors must stipulate that the minor be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian at all times.

MentorCONNECT cannot be held liable for unaccompanied minors who are allowed to participate in Mentoring Outpost activities without the presence of a parent or legal guardian.

### **Money & MentorCONNECT Offline**

MentorCONNECT is a pending 501(c)3 not-for-profit corporation.

#### Fees for Services

As specified in our non-profit charter, all individual and group mentoring services must be offered on a no-fee basis. Voluntary donations are always welcome.

When attending local events put on by other organizations, any participation fees or costs must be disclosed prior to registration. When offering special events or classes it is fine to assign a fee to cover the costs of materials, room rental, refreshments, etc, and disclose the fee to potential participants prior to registration.

#### Accepting Donations in MentorCONNECT's Name

From time to time, MentorCONNECT Mentoring Outpost leaders may wish to solicit sponsorships or donations for Mentoring Outpost activities in MentorCONNECT's name.

MentorCONNECT MC Outpost Facilitator(s) are not authorized to solicit for or accept donations or financial contributions in MentorCONNECT's name at any time.

Mentoring Outpost participants who wish to make a donation in MentorCONNECT's name must be instructed to donate online at [www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcgive](http://www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcgive)

#### Accepting Donations not made in MentorCONNECT's Name

Mentoring Outpost participants who are not concerned with being able to donate to MentorCONNECT directly or to receive a tax credit for their donation may contribute to the Mentoring Outpost leader(s) directly in support of facilities, services, supplies, refreshments, or other expenses essential to the successful operation of the Mentoring Outpost.

### **Mentoring & MentorCONNECT Offline**

Mentoring Outposts who wish to advertise the option of participating in MentorCONNECT's individual mentor matching are welcome to do so. All interested mentoring candidates must be instructed to register at [www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcmembership](http://www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcmembership) by completing the appropriate application (mentor or mentee).

All mentoring teams must complete the monthly surveys and all other mentoring requirements in order to be eligible to participate in MentorCONNECT's one-on-one mentoring program.



**Pro-Recovery Rules, Guidelines, and Participation Policies Overview**



## **Overview**

These Rules, Guidelines, and Policies are in place for the safety and support of all who participate in MentorCONNECT Online and MentorCONNECT Mentoring Outposts Offline.

## **Personal Responsibility for Private Information**

Please be aware that MentorCONNECT cannot be held responsible or liable for any personal information one participating member may choose to share with another member of MentorCONNECT.

With MentorCONNECT Offline, unlike with MentorCONNECT Online, there are no controls other than the ones individual MC Outpost Leaders may set locally to restrict the sharing of private, personal data between members.

It is critical to make all participants aware that by choosing to participate in a MentorCONNECT community, each member accepts full responsibility for the amount of personal information they may choose to disclose to other members or to the community as a whole as a part of their participation in MentorCONNECT.

At the following links you will find complete information for the following:

- 1) MentorCONNECT Forums Rules: [www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcforumsrules](http://www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcforumsrules)
- 2) MentorCONNECT Pro-Recovery Guidelines: [www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcprorecoveryguidelines](http://www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcprorecoveryguidelines)
- 3) MentorCONNECT Moderation policy: [www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcmoderationpolicy](http://www.mentorconnect-ed.org/mcmoderationpolicy)

You may adapt these rules only as needed to translate from an online to an offline format.

## **Group Participation Policies**

MentorCONNECT conducts support group meetings as a part of program activities with MentorCONNECT Online. The same basic principles apply when leading support group meetings for MentorCONNECT Offline.

Participation Policies should be read and agreed to (preferably in writing by each new participant) prior to beginning any meeting.

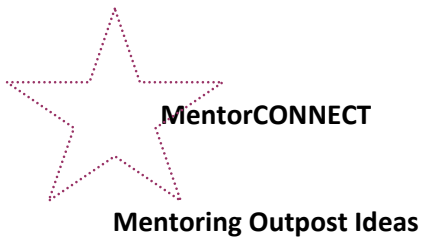
Suggested policies are as follows:

- All meeting discussions must focus on the set topic for that meeting
- Meeting discussion topics are set by the group facilitator(s). Members are welcome to suggest topics for future meetings before or after the meeting itself
- Please abide by all meeting facilitator instructions at all times
- Only pro-recovery talk is allowed so please review the Pro-Recovery Rules, Guidelines, and Policies prior to participating
- Refrain from side conversations during a meeting
- If you must arrive late or leave early do not announce your leaving as it distracts from the meeting
- Please arrive prepared to participate by taking care of personal needs such as getting a beverage, visiting the facilities, or taking calls prior to the start of the meeting
- All cell phones, pagers, and electronic devices must be in "silent" or "off" mode for each meeting



*Group Participation policies cont.*

- Refrain from offering unsolicited advice or feedback to other participants without express invitation from that other member
- Keep all sharing to first personal experience only. Use “I” language when sharing
- ALL MEETING INFORMATION IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL. Members who violate confidentiality will not be readmitted to MentorCONNECT meetings, programs, activities, or membership
- It is always permissible to “pass” when it is time to share in a meeting
- Please be aware that advice or information given and received in the course of a MentorCONNECT meeting, program, or activity may be of variable quality and is never a substitute for professional medical care, and should not be misconstrued as such. If a higher level of care is needed please speak with a meeting facilitator privately before or after the meeting
- Please keep shares concise to allow for all members who want to share to have the chance to do so
- MentorCONNECT programs, activities, and meetings are offered free of charge, although donations are always welcome





## **Let the Planning Begin**

Here is where it gets fun – it is time to start brainstorming the full potential of your new Mentoring Outpost!

### Work With What You've Got

Keep in mind when planning activities that it is not necessary to host all or even any activities in-house. Some Outposts may have their own space, others may not. Look around – see what other organizations are doing and arrange to attend activities as a group. If you have your own space or have access to space, invite other leaders in to host or co-host activities with you.

### Start Simple, Start Small, Stay Local

Pick one to three offerings to start with. Think of what others who are struggling through the recovery process might need and appreciate the most and start there. Focus on facilitating a proactive, pro-recovery environment in everything that you undertake. Keep your workload light and the agenda simple at meetings and events so you can focus on connecting, welcoming, encouraging, meeting-and-greeting.

If you are not sure of the best dates and times to plan events, ask the participants! Don't be afraid to experiment with times, dates, meeting venues, until you find what works. Set small, manageable goals – if one person shows up, that is one person who got through the day with more support than s/he had before!

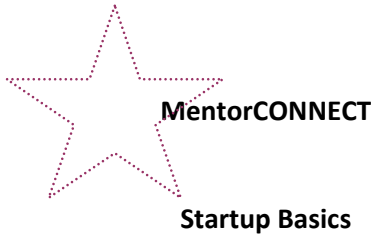
And remember that the same traits that helped you to recover – patience, persistence, and support – are the very same traits you will need to build a successful Outpost experience from the seeds of your dreams, hopes, plans, and goals.

### Clarify Opportunities and Limitations

Make it clear that participation in MentorCONNECT is NOT a substitute for professional medical care, even when medical professionals may be in attendance or in a leadership role during meetings and events. MentorCONNECT is not a crisis center or hotline or a referral or resource service.

### Some Fun Ideas to Consider

- 1) Offering book study groups
- 2) Facilitating support group meetings
- 3) Organizing restaurant and coffee shop outings
- 4) Attending live art and music events as a group
- 5) Coordinating grocery store outings
- 6) Attending or hosting yoga or body movement classes
- 7) Participating in cooking classes
- 8) Offering creativity and art classes and projects
- 9) Participating in or hosting special activities for 'theme' weeks (National Eating Disorders Awareness Week, Fat Talk Free Week, Mental Health Week, Eating Disorder Coalition's Lobby Days and more)
- 10) Presenting educational workshops facilitated by local professionals – topics ideas might include locating treatment, navigating insurance, supporting a loved one, understanding eating disorders, state and federal advocacy efforts, panel discussions, survivor story nights and more
- 11) Hosting poetry and music "open mics" to allow participants to share and celebrate talents
- 12) What other ideas do YOU have??





## Startup Basics

Finally, last but not least, here is a quick overview and review of basic principles for communications and leadership success.

## Communications Basics

These simple communications basics can always be helpful when moderating meetings, responding to questions, and resolving conflicts.

- Listening skills: Listen to what the other person is saying. It is often helpful to repeat back what you have heard from the other person before responding to make sure you have understood correctly
- Speaking skills: Email and chat-based communications cut out 90% of how we “hear” each other – nonverbally through visual and body language cues. So spend time considering what you say, or type, to ensure clarity and minimize miscommunication
- Conflict resolution skills: From time to time, miscommunication may occur. Stay calm. Backtrack to discover where the misunderstanding first began. Using your listening and speaking skills, work from that point forward to clear up any confusion. Defer resolution of conflicts with individual members to after the meeting conclusion

## Explain and Enforce

We’ve all heard the phrase “the buck stops here”. But what happens when we’re the buck???

### Two things:

- 1) First, we must make sure we communicate MentorCONNECT’s policies, procedures, and expectations clearly to participants
- 2) Next, once we have done that, we must be prepared to reinforce these policies as a part of our leadership obligations. MentorCONNECT Online has a clear and simple Moderation Policy that is posted for all members to review.

This helps leaders and facilitators enforce rules and expectations with a minimum of conflict.

When beginning operations for your Mentoring Outpost, we highly recommend that you implement some similarly simple guidelines to read at the start of every meeting, event, activity, or outing. These guidelines explain what you can and can’t offer, what is permissible and what is not permissible.

Here is an example that you can work from and adapt to your needs and purposes:

- Rule #1: During meetings/activity times, discussions must focus on the stated theme, topic, or activity
- Rule #2: Please abide by all facilitator or leader instructions at all times during meetings and activities
- Rule #3: Only pro-recovery talk is allowed so please review the participation policies before taking part
- Rule #4: Failure to abide by Confidentiality, Pro-Recovery Rules, Guidelines, and Participation Policies may result in an invitation to cease from participating in Outpost activities and events
- Rule #5: If you must arrive late or leave early do not announce your comings or goings as this distracts from others’ ability to focus and concentrate
- Rule #6: Please arrive prepared to participate by ensuring you have sufficient energy, nutrition, and focus to engage in and add to the group’s experience
- Rule #7: MentorCONNECT is not a crisis hotline or referral resource so please make other arrangements for attending to pressing health concerns and needs



**MentorCONNECT**

**Representing MentorCONNECT in an Offline Setting**



### **Use of MentorCONNECT Name and all Copyrighted & Trademarked Materials**

It is only natural to want to promote your Outpost activities and MentorCONNECT's leadership encourages this!

Please keep in mind as you develop promotional materials, to include but not limited to press releases, flyers, brochures, postcards, email signatures, or other items to get the word out in your community, that you are welcome to use MentorCONNECT's logo and trademarked "Relationships Replace Eating Disorders" slogan as long as the following conditions are met:

MentorCONNECT's name, logo, slogan, and website address must be presented without any alteration. This includes color, height, and width conformity of logos, including a "TM" symbol following the slogan "relationships replace eating disorders™".

The website address used should always be written [www.mentorconnect-ed.org](http://www.mentorconnect-ed.org).

MentorCONNECT's leadership MUST pre-approve all literature and materials that include MentorCONNECT's name, logo, slogan, website address, and other references to MentorCONNECT as an operating 501(c)3 nonprofit organization.

To obtain approval for use of copyrighted and trademarked materials, simply send a draft in Word or PDF format to [mc@mentorconnect-ed.org](mailto:mc@mentorconnect-ed.org). If the material is very timely, please also note "URGENT" in the subject line of your email so we will attend to it right away. Otherwise, we will answer all emails within our normal guidelines of 48-72 business hours.

### **Terminology Used**

MentorCONNECT is an independent, non-affiliated eating disorders mentoring community.

As such we do not espouse any particular therapeutic, religious, or twelve step philosophy. The terminology we use for both Online and Offline activities is simple, free from confusion and ambiguity, and avoids any "jargon", "lingo", or "industry terms" that new prospective members may not be familiar with.

Outpost leaders are expected to refrain from "branding" their Outpost in such a way as might exclude individuals who are suffering from eating disorders and need support but are not situated to adopt a specific methodology or approach to recovery beyond that of matching with a mentor for extra support. For questions about this policy, please email us at [mc@mentorconnect-ed.org](mailto:mc@mentorconnect-ed.org).



### **Keeping in Touch**

All Mentoring Outpost leaders are expected to keep MentorCONNECT's Leadership Team updated on all Outpost activities, events, and outreach efforts.

Whenever possible, MentorCONNECT Online will attempt to connect new members who are geographically located near an offline Outpost to plug in to what your group is doing.

This accomplishes two key goals:

- 1) Gives the member a safe space in their local community to connect
- 2) Gives the member a chance to practice relationship skills used in the safety of an online environment in a real-time community as well

Please be prepared to report in at least monthly to update the MentorCONNECT Leadership Team with your calendar of activities, membership information, and anything else you would like to share.

### **How to Reach Us**

Phone: 713-382-4272

Email: [mc@mentorconnect-ed.org](mailto:mc@mentorconnect-ed.org)

*So have fun, enjoy your Outpost as it grows, and keep us posted! 😊*

***Your MentorCONNECT Leadership & Advisory Team***