



RID-NCIEC MENTORING GRANTS



South Carolina RID Launches the Peer Mentoring Program!

As a small, rural state, the South Carolina interpreter population predominantly works in isolation with little, if any, resources available to them. The South Carolina RID is actively addressing this issue through the recently established Peer Mentoring Program (PMP). The PMP aims to increase the skills of interpreters who are working in specialized settings; are from minority and/or underserved populations; and/or are new interpreters.

True to most mentoring programs, the Peer Mentoring Program (PMP) is designed to support the individual professional development of interpreters and to create a community of learning that can be used for on-going growth. However, the PMP digresses from the classical mentor-protégé paradigm and firmly holds that *each interpreter*, no matter where they are in their developmental or experiential stage *has something of value to offer their peers*. The *emphasis* is focused more *on egalitarian mentoring* and less on traditional hierarchical mentor relationships. At its heart, the PMP holds that every person has expertise and a means to make a contribution. The PMP works toward providing a structure in which techniques, tools, and strategies empower interpreters to concurrently reap the rewards of having a mentor and working with a protégé – yet – as a peer.

As a recipient of RID-NCIEC grant funds, South Carolina RID has been actively engaged with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCSDE) as a collaborative partner. The SCSDE has committed significant funds toward the PMP – a miraculous feat given the extreme funding crisis. A significant factor in this support is attributed to both the SCSDE, and the South Carolina RID, expression that the PMP maximizes the potential of limited fiscal, and human, resources in South Carolina.

Phase I of the PMP was completed in mid-autumn in which the South Carolina RID identified partners and developed the PMP infrastructure; crafted and distributed promotional materials; established participant criterion; and, recruited participants.

The PMP recently completed Phase II, when selected participants attended ten hours of on-site training. Wendy Watson and Laurie Shaffer led ten peer-mentors (representing over five percent of interpreters in the entire state)

through the foundations and strategies of being an active, supportive peer-mentor. During this phenomenal training session, a series of highly-effective tools were field-tested as participants engaged in several role-play exercises. Peer-mentor participants also extensively rehearsed authentic listening, paraphrasing, probing, and use of objective language strategies. Finally, peer-mentors self-selected peer teams which they each committed to working with for the next six months. This was a most amazing education session for all involved! Each dyad was gently, yet strongly, encouraged to capitalize on the rich similarity between peers and to foster the acceptance of new challenges, willingness to experiment, and take risks in a safe environment.

South Carolina RID looks forward to reporting on the remaining phases as our newly charged peer-mentors jointly and regularly work on: the identification of areas of strength and areas needing development; the establishing of measurable objectives; and, work toward the attainment and measurement of each of the identified objectives.