



RID-NCIEC MENTORING GRANTS



The Mentorship Program, Massachusetts

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The Mentorship Program of Massachusetts is using Mentorship Challenge Grant monies to increase the skills of new interpreters in the field, with an emphasis on reaching out to interpreters of color and other underserved populations. As we enter the final phase of our work with this grant, we have reviewed our efforts over the past two years to determine which approaches have been most effective in attracting and maintaining diversity in our core service population of aspiring and working interpreters.

We have noted three approaches which have been particularly effective and will continue in FY 09:

1. Include individuals of color in all areas of planning and programming – Including interpreters and Deaf individuals of color in all aspects of our planning and programming, as staff, workshop presenters and mentors, has naturally widened our circle of outreach, drawing in new mentees and workshop participants, and we will continue to include people from various backgrounds and cultures in all aspects of planning and programming in the coming year.
2. Provide social opportunities – Providing informal social opportunities where individuals are welcome to join activities without making any formal commitment has proven effective in providing easy entrée into our community. Once participants engage with each other, staff, mentees and mentors socially, it makes joining a more formal, academic workshop or program less intimidating. In order to build on the social network we have begun establishing (our most recent *ASL Games/Talent Show* with MC Ivy Velez left people asking for more!) we are planning fall and spring social events in addition to our annual Open House in FY 09.
3. Foster peer support groups – We are currently fostering the growth of a recently formed peer support group for interpreters of color. This group has grown organically from the efforts of Letitia Bynoe, our Community

Outreach Specialist, to personally reach out to and engage aspiring and working interpreters of color. Currently, Letitia is in touch with a group of six interpreters who are invited to a monthly meeting. In between meetings, Letitia shares information about events happening through The Mentorship Program and in the community. In addition, group members share updates on how they are doing on their journey of interpreting (what accomplishments have taken place, risks being taken, challenges being faced) so the group can mark their progress and celebrate together. Members of the group provide informal mentoring for each other, sharing their strengths with one another to make them stronger individually, as well as collectively. Those who have been consistently coming to the meetings feel inspired, uplifted and supported! We look forward to the continued growth of this group in the coming year. For more information about this group, please contact Letitia Bynoe at letitia.bynoe@massmentorship.org.

We are inspired by the progress we have made toward achieving our overall goal of establishing The Mentorship Program as a known ally with all interpreters, regardless of race, color or creed and are grateful to all of our allies in the community who have shared their energy, ideas and good will. Thank you!

For more information about The Mentorship Program, please visit our Web site at www.massmentorship.org or contact Irma Kahle at irma.kahle@massmentorship.org.