

A Mentoring Program for Students with Asperger and ASDs

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Edited by James M. Bebko, Jessica H. Schroeder & Megan E. Ames

A Mentoring Program for Students with Asperger and ASDs

Edited by James M. Bebko, Jessica H. Schroeder, & Megan E. Ames
The York University Asperger Mentorship Program

York University
Toronto, Ontario

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Chapter One

Mission Statement and Overview

Lisa Hancock, Kristen McFee, & James Bebko

The transition to university is a challenging time for many students. Academic demands are increasing, social norms are changing, and students are expected to be more independent than ever before. Along with these changes, many of the supports that are available to students in high school are no longer in place, such as small group instruction and access to special education resource teachers. The Higher Education Council of Education identified necessary supports for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD, including Asperger Syndrome, are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2) in a postsecondary setting and includes “a requirement for staff specifically trained in ASD, a dedicated “safe” space for these students and academic studies supported by staff trained as ASD coaches” (p.2; Alcorn MacKay, 2010). However, most Ontario universities do not have these supports and as a result, students have an increased responsibility for their own post-secondary education. For students with an ASD, the transition to university and adapting to university life can be an even greater challenge. Between 2009 and 2011 alone, it is estimated 1100 students with and ASD will be entering an Ontario college or university (Alcorn MacKay, 2010).

At York University, in Toronto, Canada, the number of identified students with an ASD increased from three in the 2003-2004 academic year, to twenty-seven identified students in the 2008-2009 academic year. This represents an overall 800% increase in identified students in a five-year period. To date, there is limited research or resources describing the needs, supports, and experiences of Canadian students with Asperger Syndrome (AS) entering post-secondary education. Some of the specific challenges that may be faced by these students include securing

housing, navigating transportation systems, obtaining accommodations around exams, accommodating their learning styles to new teachers, managing “disruptive” behaviours, as well as seeking career counselling and improving social interactions, and peer relationships. Further, adults and adolescents with an Autism Spectrum Disorder are at higher risk for co-existing mental health problems, commonly attention deficit disorder and anxiety disorders (Gurkan, Akcakin, Kilic & Bilgic 2008; Hofvander et al., 2009). As such, it is even more important that university services are developed to address the multiple challenges and complex mental health needs of this population of students.

At York University there are several support systems in place to serve the needs of students with AS. If students are eligible for the Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP), they may qualify for funding from the Bursary for Students with Disabilities (BSWD) to receive additional academic tutoring. Additionally, if a psycho-educational assessment has indicated the need for it, students are provided with transcription services, note-taking, and assistive technology. Students are often provided with accommodations on exams, including extended time and an alternate writing location, to decrease distractions and mitigate anxiety. The Academic Writing Centre and Learning Skills Program also accommodate students with Asperger Syndrome, for example, by providing alternate room locations for exam writing and providing access to additional computer resources. These services are coordinated by The Counselling and Disability Services (CDS) at York University, where students also receive individual and group counselling.

The Development of the Asperger Mentorship Program (AMP)

The influx in students identified on the Autism Spectrum in the 2007-2008 year proved more than expected by York Admissions and CDS. Given this influx, Dr. James Bebko, a professor and clinical psychologist in the area of ASD and developmental disabilities anticipated that the current university services would not meet the full spectrum of these students’ needs. Through contact with the CDS at York University, this estimate was proven accurate and the CDS was experiencing a significant increase in students with AS struggling with new challenges found in university. In collaboration with the CDS, Dr. Bebko and graduate students in the department of Clinical-Developmental Psychology, developed the **Asperger Mentorship Program** to provide support beyond the standard academic and psychological services already in place.

Graduate students initially conducted focus groups with interested students to better understand their needs and specific difficulties of navigating university life with AS. Students with AS identified several areas of interest such as social outings, advice, someone to listen, group support, personalized support, and help with organization. The format of the program (i.e.,

bimonthly group events and weekly individual meetings with a mentor) was then designed to meet the needs voiced directly from the students.

What is a mentor?

Mentors consist of graduate-level university students, most of whom have a background in clinical psychology and specific work and/or research experience in the field of ASDs. Through the group events and individual meetings, mentors work with students to achieve their personal goals. The role of the mentor is akin to that of a “coach,” and this metaphor is frequently used when explaining the program to incoming students. A coach helps you practice skills, they help you prepare for the game, they cheer you along, and work with you after the game to talk about what went well and how to practice for the next game – but a coach does not play the game for or with you. This analogy is used to clarify that the role of the mentor is different from a counsellor or a friend. These boundaries are made clear when students join the program. Mentors also attend group events on a biweekly basis. Primary responsibilities within this setting are to assist students in planning social events, to suggest topics of discussion that have come up frequently or within individual meetings, to redirect students from “disruptive” behaviours when required, increase awareness of nonverbal behaviours and their impact on the group (e.g., eye contact, body posture), and to foster a sense of belonging and group cohesion.

The AMP was developed to address those needs of students with AS that were not being met by other well-established services within the university. With an awareness to avoid duplication of services, the AMP was developed to assist students to develop a sense of belonging in a peer group, to support students as they navigate university life, and provide a coach to talk through some of these difficulties.

This manual was developed to outline the development of the AMP. Its primary purpose is to provide an explanation of how we developed this university support service, goals of the program, individual components of the program, integration of research and evaluation, and future development. It is important to note, that this manual was not created as a “how-to” resource to develop a mentorship program; however, it may be of assistance to those universities or colleges in the early stages of developing a similar program.

Goals of the Mentorship Program

The overarching goal of this peer-to-peer program is to aid students with an ASD to feel a sense of belonging in the academic and social fabric of York University’s campus life.

The objectives of the AMP are: 1) to build a social network or peer group within the university community for students with an ASD; 2) to provide a supportive environment for university students with an ASD; and 3) to encourage organizational skill development.

Ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness and success of the program helps to ensure that it is meeting the needs of the students, as well as the objectives and goals of the mentoring program. One indicator of the program's effectiveness is a low drop-out rate of student participants each year, indicating that the program is meeting their needs. Another indicator is the feedback from both students and mentors at the midpoint and end of the school year regarding the strengths and weakness of the program. To determine the effectiveness and success of the program over the long-term a number of factors will be evaluated: a) the increase in the number of participants across the first several years as information spreads through the student body through word-of-mouth and through parent organizations and; b) the rate of retention of students through completion of their degrees. The goal is a rate that is similar to that of the larger student body at York.

Overall, the success of these goals indicate that the project has created a comfortable and accepting space where there are possibilities for friendships to be formed among participants. Not only are these four components indicators of the success of the AMP, but feedback from students can be used to fine-tune the AMP goals across the years.

Chapter Two

Description of the Population

Megan Ames & Jessica Schroeder

Students participating in the AMP have been diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), most commonly Asperger syndrome. Students from all levels of university are invited to participate in the program and are typically between the ages of 17 and 25. All students identified with an ASD are welcome to the AMP, however the majority of students participating in the program are diagnosed with Asperger syndrome.

About Autism Spectrum Disorders

Autism and Asperger syndrome exist among a cluster of disorders currently referred to as Pervasive Development Disorders (APA, 1994). Included in this cluster are three disorders: Autistic Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder-Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), and Asperger syndrome (AS). These three disorders are commonly referred to as Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) because they are thought to exist on a spectrum of symptom severity and level of functioning. Autistic Disorder and PDD-NOS span the full range of symptom severity and adaptive functioning, from the most severely affected to the less severe end, while those with AS tend to have less severe symptoms. Individuals with ASDs experience varying degrees of difficulty in three main areas: social relationships, verbal and non-verbal communication, and unusual and repetitive behaviour and/or circumscribed interests. As many as 1 in 150 people have some form of an ASD (Fombonne, 2003), and it is far more common in males than females,

with a gender ratio of approximately 4:1 (possibly slightly less in AS; Fombonne et al., 2006). Based on current population statistics for Ontario, this prevalence rate translates to over 74,000 individuals in Ontario living with an ASD, including those with AS. Although research on the prevalence rates for AS is ongoing, a conservative estimate is 1 in 400 people have AS (Fombonne, 2003). As the prevalence rates of children with an ASD increase, so do the number of adolescents and adults with an ASD. Furthermore, researchers can find no single cause for these disorders, and therefore, neurological, behavioural and genetic research continues.

Common Traits of Individuals with Asperger syndrome

Individuals with AS often experience a number of challenges that vary by degree and can impact their day-to-day functioning. Such challenges may include the following. Please note that not all individuals have all characteristics.

- Difficulty in initiating or maintaining close relationships
- Problems reading non-verbal or social cues or understanding/using social rules
- Social naiveté that can result in rejection, bullying, and being taken advantage of by others
- Avoidant of social contact or events, and may experience heightened anxiety in social situations
- Some interest in having social contact but lacking the requisite social skills
- Average to superior intelligence that can be associated with verbosity
- Detail oriented approach to tasks, which may result in missing the “bigger picture”
- Special focus on, and often deep knowledge about, a narrow field of interest
- Difficulty with the socio-pragmatic use of speech, often resulting in misunderstanding of nuance, sarcasm, humour or unspoken components of communication.
- Because of those socio-pragmatic issues, difficulty understanding when others are becoming disinterested in detailed sharing about a special focus.

College and university-aged students with AS face many additional, related challenges. Many require assistance in determining course loads and breaking their work down into manageable tasks. Some have difficulty acting appropriately in class (e.g., correcting professors or asking too many questions). Students with AS often report challenges with group work and group presentations. Most students with AS need support with social issues, such as dating or living with roommates. The North American reality is that most university support personnel lack the training or the time to appropriately support students with challenges such as AS. Without additional support networks in place on campus, these students are at risk of falling through the cracks and becoming increasingly marginalized.

Chapter Three

Program Components

Megan Ames, Carly McMorris, & Jessica Schroeder

The Asperger Mentorship Program is a multifaceted service for students diagnosed with AS. Broadly, the program begins with student interviews which lead to individual meetings in order to provide the students with personalized support, as well as social events, and ongoing program evaluation. This chapter will briefly describe each component of the AMP and its purpose and function within the program.

Interviews

Initial interviews are conducted with every student participating in the program at the beginning of each school year. These interviews allow the mentors to better understand the characteristics, as well as the needs, of the students using the AMP. These interviews included students previously in the program, as returning students may not necessarily have the same mentor as the previous year, and their needs may have changed. During the interview, the students are asked to provide details of which supports might be most appropriately suited to them, thus individualizing the program to better suit their goals and needs. Initial interviews include a wide range of topics such as personal background, resources the students are currently accessing, interests, and their goals for themselves for the mentorship program. By interviewing the students at the beginning of the year, this also provides the mentors and program developers with ideas for group events, and enables them to determine which aspects of the program may be most relevant for the students. At the end of each academic year, the students are also given an

exit interview to assess their satisfaction with the mentorship program, specifically how much the program met their individual needs, as well as some areas of strengths of the program and recommended improvements. These exit interviews provide valuable feedback for the AMP and, if necessary, allow specific components to be revised for the following year.

Meetings with Students

Individual Meetings

The two main components of the AMP are individual meetings and group events. Each student is paired with an individual mentor at the beginning of the school year. The mentor is there to provide either weekly or biweekly support to the student based on his or her individual needs. These meetings provide students with individualized attention and the opportunity to discuss personally relevant or private issues. Individual meetings can also be an opportunity to develop strategies to work through specific problems and a place to practice target skills.

Group Events

Group events aid students in building a social network and peer group within the university community in a safe environment. These events occur bi-monthly and are chosen based on recommendations by the students. Typically, social events occur on campus (e.g., pizza party, sports events, plays) but off campus events (e.g., bowling) have also been organized. These events allow students to socialize with one another in a fun environment, and they may help motivate the students to be involved in planning future events.

By providing the students with a variety of program components, it is hoped that the AMP will offer the best services and reach the greatest number of students, given the diversity of this population. Ongoing evaluation of the program informs program development to ensure the quality of service provided to the students.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation is an extremely important and ongoing piece of the program. Program evaluation provides valuable feedback for the program allowing for a better understanding of the needs of the student population utilizing the AMP and whether or not the program is meeting those needs. The target criteria being evaluated are those described in the Goals section of Chapter 1. Interviews, questionnaires, and surveys are integral components of this evaluation. It is imperative to continuously evaluate the program in order to modify components that may need improvement and identify possible student needs, thereby providing the best services for the students. As previously mentioned, interviews and questionnaires are completed at the beginning, mid-year, and end of each school year. Questionnaires assess students' perceived sense of belonging, social supports, and sense of acceptance in the university

setting, along with student satisfaction with program components. Surveys on student satisfaction with the social events are completed following every event. Brief reports are completed by the mentor at the end of each individual session and group event to track the topics that were discussed, as well as anything that may require follow-up.

Chapter Four

Individual Meetings

Jessica Schroeder & Megan Ames

Purpose

Individual meetings offer students the opportunity to establish a one-on-one relationship with a mentor. These meetings are an important component of the program because they provide students with individual attention to discuss issues that are unique to them. Individual meetings also provide students with the opportunity to talk about personal issues that they may not feel comfortable discussing within the group setting. For many students it is during the individual meetings that “mentoring” really takes place. These meetings are particularly important when working with the AS population, as they allow students who would prefer not to interact with others, or who feel overwhelmed in a group setting, the opportunity to access individualized support.

Structure

The structure of meetings is developed in conjunction with the student. Most mentors meet with students for one hour once a week at a regularly scheduled time. However, meeting frequency is individualized -- if more (or less) frequent meetings are needed, that need is accommodated. Mentors and students meet on campus and the student determines the location. For example, some have met in student lounges on campus, while others meet over coffee or

food (associated costs are the responsibility of each person). Mentors and students are able to continue to meet during the summer; however, some students opt to take a break during the summer and resume meetings in the fall. If a regular mentor is not available for a scheduled meeting time, students are given the option to meet with another mentor. There is also the option to structure the meetings so that there are two mentors with one student. This option may be preferred if there are concerns about boundary issues or if a student exhibits challenging behaviours or clinically significant problems (e.g., aggression, depressive symptoms). Another option is for mentors to meet in pairs with two students occasionally. This small group environment provides students with unique opportunities to interact with another student in a small and supportive social setting.

Matching Mentors and Students

Students are matched with mentors primarily based on availability, as scheduling is often a challenge. When pairing students with mentors, several factors are taken into consideration. Gender may be of relevance as some students may benefit from same-sex mentors while others may work better with opposite-sex mentors. In general, every effort is made to pair students who have higher needs (e.g., co-morbid diagnoses such as depression or anxiety) with more experienced mentors. At the start of each year, it is important to discuss if continuing students should meet with the same mentor, or if they should work with new mentors.

Topics

The role of the mentor in individual meetings is determined, in large part, by the needs of the student. Often, due to the socio-pragmatic communication issues involved in AS, some students prefer that the mentor take the lead in determining topics of conversation; but once comfortable with their mentor, many students prefer to guide the topics. Mentors take notes after each session to review what topics were discussed, the proportion of time spent discussing particular topics, and if follow-up is required by the mentor in the next session and/or during supervision. Topics that are commonly discussed include courses, social interaction issues, evening and weekend social plans, and hobbies. However, more serious personal issues are sometimes raised, such as risky sexual behaviour, substance issues, etc. Individual meetings provide students with the opportunity to work through specific problems with their mentors. Examples of such issues include: how to schedule study time for midterms, appropriate behaviour at a party, how to approach a professor about a problem, and some topics relating to personal issues (e.g., dating). Individual meetings can inform group events by providing topics that may be of interest to the group, and topics discussed in the group may also impact topics discussed in individual meetings. However, more personal topics, such as romantic relationships, family issues, and challenges in social skills tend to come up primarily in individual meetings. If more significant mental health or similar issues arise, mentors inform the students that they

should discuss these issues with their counsellor at the Counselling and Disability Service (CDS) at the university, or with other mental health professionals who are already supporting them so that appropriate support services can be coordinated.

Chapter Five

Group Events

Megan Ames & Carly McMorris

Group events provide students with the opportunity to build a social network by offering a safe environment to meet with other students with a diagnosis of AS or other ASD. The group events give students a sense of social inclusion, a feeling of acceptance, and a sense of belonging within the university community. The group is attended by students participating within the AMP as well as mentors. Events last approximately one hour to two hours and are held every two weeks. Typically two to three mentors are present at each event to help facilitate communication and participation within the group. Events are planned by the mentors or the students, based on recommendations from the students, and advertised by the communication and engagement committee (described in Chapter 8).

The group event is usually social in nature (i.e., pizza party, video game party, bowling, school sporting event, etc.). During the event, mentors are typically there to provide support to the students, if necessary, as the students engage in the activity. Group events can also serve as a forum for other topics that may arise throughout the school year. For example, the first group event of the year involves setting boundaries and rules for the group, as well as outlining the definition and limits of the mentor's role. Students are actively involved in this process and create a mandate for the group and mentors to abide by. Other topics that are brought up by students include, but are not limited to: anxieties about midterms and finals, brainstorming ideas about finding a summer job, issues involving dating, drinking and partying, living in residence, etc. Students also socialize amongst themselves and talk about their common interests. Students are encouraged to build social networks with each other and to meet informally, outside of group events, independent of the mentors. Students have set up their own private group on a social networking site (Facebook) to set up activities outside of the AMP scheduled events, and particularly to continue informal events throughout the summer.

Overall, group events provide a safe environment for students diagnosed with AS to socialize with other students and to plan and partake in social activities within the university community.

Chapter Six

Starting Up

Carly McMorris & Jessica Schroeder

Mentor Training and Knowledge

Mentors in the York University AMP are currently either Masters or PhD level students in the Clinical Developmental (CD) Area in York University's Psychology Department. Being graduate students in the CD area, mentors have backgrounds in typical development and developmental differences. The majority of mentors have experience working with children, adolescents, and/or adults with ASDs, either in a research or clinical capacity. Thus, prior to becoming mentors, most have experience working with individuals with ASDs, although that experience may have been with younger or more affected individuals. In addition, as part of their studies, mentors gain clinical training in psychological assessment and intervention both through practica at hospitals and mental health organizations, as well as through coursework.

To ensure an adequate level of knowledge about AS, mentors entering into the program are required to take part in a training module, which involves the following:

- 1) Reading journal articles related to AS, individuals with AS in the University or College setting, as well as readings related to other mentoring programs
- 2) Reading the AMP manual
- 3) Attending group planning and supervision meetings
- 4) Attending a group training session with other mentors that focuses on topics including ethics, the mentorship role, boundaries, confidentiality, and the protocol to follow in the event of crisis situations
- 5) Observing a group event along with more experienced AMP mentors
- 6) Shadowing (attending) individual meetings between a student and an experienced mentor

Identifying and Building Resources

The AMP works closely with the university's Counselling and Disability Services (CDS). CDS provides a range of services to students on campus, including personal counselling, group development workshops, learning skills training, support, and academic accommodation for students with learning, mental health, physical, sensory and medical disabilities. Despite the numerous services provided by the CDS, the AMP was created to help fill a gap in the services available to this growing group of students attending York University. In particular, university students with AS may additionally require ongoing assistance in managing their courses,

learning appropriate behaviour in class and they may also need support with social issues. Thus, the AMP provides a specialized peer-to-peer support, related to the social aspects of being a university student, in both a group and individual format. Students enter the program primarily through a referral from the CDS. Additional outreach efforts with local high schools and the community at large are being implemented to inform students before they enter the university about the AMP. This is to enable support to be initiated in the students' first few weeks of school or before, during the transition to university. Other initiatives to connect students with the program include advertising, presentations, seminars, and word of mouth.

Resources Needed for the Program

- 1) The ability to identify students and connect with students with Asperger syndrome at the university, through close working relationships with other student support services, as well as raising awareness of the existence of the program through various media within and outside the university
- 2) Availability of an equal number of interested mentors - - but a minimum of one mentor for every two or three students
- 3) A professional (psychologist, social worker, counsellor) to supervise the program, preferably someone familiar with Asperger syndrome
- 4) A meeting space for group events (this would likely be an on-campus location, such as a seminar room, a coffee shop, or the specific event location)
- 5) A centralized email address to communicate with students
- 6) Time availability -- meeting 1:1 with students an average of once a week, with more or less frequent meetings determined by the student's need, student and mentor group events every other week, group supervision for mentors every other week, and group planning meetings for mentors once a month

Chapter Seven

Stakeholders

Kristen McFee & James Bebko

A program such as the AMP impacts on people and systems beyond the individuals involved as mentors and as students in the program. Stakeholders in such a program are defined as those persons or organizations that can affect or are affected by the program, as well as its evaluation, either directly or indirectly. This often includes:

- 1) Individuals and organizations involved in program operations and funding
- 2) Those served or affected by the program
- 3) Primary users of the evaluation of the program

Program Operators

With reference to the AMP, stakeholders involved in (1) program operations, include the various funding bodies, university administration, managers, and staff. Funding bodies include private foundations, potential government sources, and potential internal funding through the university. Program administration, managers and staff in our program include the clinical director of the AMP, as well as the directors of the CDS, the AMP program manager, and the graduate student mentors. Other staff members include: the research team, who are involved in program development and the program evaluation components of the AMP; the outreach team, who coordinate efforts to connect with external community resources to increase awareness of the program and facilitate transitions to and out of university; and the communication and enrolment team, who coordinate awareness efforts and liaise with relevant services within the university. In many cases, some of these roles overlap in the same individuals, and in most cases, the roles are filled by the mentors.

Individuals Served by the Program

Stakeholders included in (2), above, are those primarily served or affected by the AMP. They include, at the first, most direct level, the individual students with AS participating in the program, and the student mentors who are providing support, but are also learning and developing professionally from the experience. At a secondary level are the family members of the students with AS, through the student themselves. At a tertiary level, those affected by the program include York University as a whole and community organizations, such as Autism Ontario and the Asperger Society of Ontario. The latter two organizations are parent support organizations that may identify the AMP as a future referral source when working with families

and young adults embarking on the transition to higher level, post-secondary education. There are also a number of still more indirect stakeholders affected by the development of the AMP. These include the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities in Ontario, community support services, and employers within the university community and larger community who employ students with AS participating in the AMP. They may be particularly affected if the AMP is indeed successful in helping participants develop better social and organizational skills, which may in turn translate into employment skills.

Primary Users of the Evaluation

Finally, stakeholders included in (3), above, represent the primary users of the evaluation of the program; they are typically a subset of those stakeholders previously identified. They are frequently those individuals and organizations that are in a position to make decisions regarding program development. Primary stakeholders include the AMP team, as well the students with AS, as the evaluations inform the development of curriculum and necessary program components that will satisfy students' needs. Funders have a direct interest in the evaluation, as it gives an indication of the effectiveness of the funding they contribute. Elements within the larger government social services sector are also likely to have an interest in the outcome of the evaluation.

As should be clear from the understanding of the range of potential stakeholders, the development of a mentoring program such as this is very much a community activity. The impact and potential benefits from the program may extend well beyond the actual participants in the program.

Chapter Eight

Roles and Committees

Gayle Goldstein & Megan Ames

Within the mentorship program there are several roles mentors play that contribute to the functioning and effectiveness of the program. The qualifications and roles of mentors are described in this section. Furthermore, several committees were formed to manage particular components of the program, and a description of the committees is also provided.

Program Supervisor

Qualifications

The Program Supervisor should have professional training to be able to provide an adequate level of clinical supervision as expected and unexpected issues arise. While the program is not itself seen as necessarily clinical in its focus, some of the issues that arise can be complex enough to warrant professional support. At York, the AMP Program Supervisor is a Clinical Psychologist. Additionally, the supervisor should have training and experience in working with or providing services for individuals who have an ASD, preferably including experience with individuals diagnosed with AS.

Role

The Program Supervisor assists with the intake of new students and coordinates with CDS to ensure that additional psychological needs are being met. Supervision is provided for mentors on a regular basis around issues that arise during group or individual meetings with students. It is also part of the supervisor's role to help mentors ensure that they are not providing clinical services, but instead remaining in a 'mentorship' role. However, when clinical issues occur, the psychologist (Program Supervisor) will ensure the mentors undertake the appropriate decision-making process. For example, if external psychological or psychiatric care is needed to ensure the health and safety of a student, the Program Supervisor will help to support the mentor in providing support for the student and, together with CDS, refer the student for appropriate services. An additional role of the psychologist (Program Supervisor) is to liaise with the CDS, outreach groups, and funding bodies.

Administrator

Qualifications

The administrator has at least a Bachelor's degree in psychology or a related field as well as a working knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorders. Clinical experience with this population

may be helpful in order to help with intake services. Good organizational, presentation, and liaison skills are important to help maintain the program structure and ensure that mentors and trainees are attending meetings.

Role

The administrator is responsible for liaising with the CDS to organize intake information for new students. The administrator also helps to organize group events, assign mentors and students, recruit mentor trainees, and follow up on mentorship supervision. As a result, the administrator needs to attend all program meetings and take minutes. Meetings may include mentor group supervision meetings, meetings with funding bodies, the CDS, and possibly outreach groups. The administrator also helps to ensure that mentors are: attending sessions, fulfilling contracted hours, and ensuring that when mentors cannot attend sessions, a replacement mentor is arranged. While it is possible that the Administrator is not a mentor, the Administrator is more fully informed when he/she serves in a mentor role.

Senior Mentors

Qualifications

Senior mentors have at least a Master's degree in psychology or a related field, at least one year of experience as a mentor, and one year of experience as a trainee with the AMP. They also have at least one year of experience working in a clinical setting (e.g., one clinical practicum). Further, senior mentors should have knowledge and previous experience working with individuals with an ASD. In the unusual situation that a senior mentor may not be providing mentoring services to students, having clinical knowledge will help support other mentors during decision-making processes and ensure that there is a separation between what are intended as mentorship services, and those of a more clinical nature that may require referral.

Role

Senior mentors are supervised directly by the Program Supervisor. They also provide direct supervision to junior mentors and trainees during supervision meetings, following individual meetings or group events, and when issues arise. Senior mentors also provide a mentorship role during supervision meetings to ensure that if any clinical issues arise, they can be managed using appropriate decision-making procedures. Senior mentors typically provide mentorship directly to students with AS, or may attend sessions with a mentor or trainee to help promote and develop their skills.

It is the senior mentors' responsibility to ensure that mentors and trainees feel comfortable working with students. Therefore, they provide direct supervision as well as direct training that strengthen the mentorship skills of junior mentors and trainees, particularly if the supervisor should be unavailable. During supervision, senior mentors will also ascertain the quality of mentorship that is being provided by mentors and trainees and provide feedback as

required. Senior mentors will meet with the supervising psychologist and provide information about the progress of mentors and trainees.

Senior mentors may also be required, in addition to the supervisor, to liaise with the CDS, outreach groups, and funding bodies (e.g., oral presentations, posters, and discussion sessions).

Mentors

Qualifications

Mentors typically have at least a Bachelor's degree in psychology or a related field, and have at least one year of experience as a trainee with the AMP. They also have previous knowledge and experience working with individuals with ASD.

Role

Mentors are most active during group events and individual meetings with students. They are expected to rotate with other mentors in attending group activities that are based on the university campus. No mentors are required to attend any off campus student group activities, as these are usually organized by the students and are for the students.

Mentors meet on a regular basis with senior mentors and periodically with the supervisor to discuss any mentorship or clinical issues. Any clinically significant issues (e.g., mental health concerns, academic progress) need to be reported to a more senior member (senior mentor or supervisor) to ensure the proper decision-making procedure is taken (e.g., supervision with psychologist, consultation with CDS, etc.).

Mentors may be asked to participate in presentations to share information about the mentorship program, liaise with outreach groups, funding bodies, and with the CDS. They will also be required to attend any training sessions offered to promote mentorship skills.

Trainees

Qualifications

Trainees may be individuals who currently have or may be completing their undergraduate degree or diploma. All mentors will typically begin as trainees in their first year with the program. They are considered volunteers at this stage. As trainees, they will demonstrate an interest in learning about and working with individuals who have an ASD and the ability to attend training sessions provided.

Role

Trainees may be paired with students based on student needs and/or age and can be considered a 'buddy' to the student, as they may provide a closer perspective for age appropriate peer interactions. They may co-attend individual meetings or group events as well as any additional activities that students may choose to organize. The goal of the trainee is to provide

peer support or interactions that are appropriate to the university setting. Trainees are to be supervised by senior mentors to provide support, and are expected to keep mentors involved with the student well informed about interactions with the student.

Counselling and Disability Services

Role

Counselling and Disability Services (CDS) collaborate with the mentorship program in identifying students who may wish to participate in the program. CDS may be the first interaction students have with university services, and CDS helps to coordinate other services the student is already receiving or will be receiving, as well as any other services they wish to receive. CDS provides academic counselling and is typically the point of referral from the AMP for any counselling or clinical services needed. The mentorship program and CDS liaise to share important clinical (e.g., mental health) information about students participating in both programs.

Committees

In order to disperse the workload and increase the efficiency and efficacy of the program, committees are formed to take on specific tasks. The committees meet with the Program Supervisor periodically, and they report to all the mentors when needed.

Communication and Engagement

This committee helps to support the administrator in multiple ways. They help develop and implement initiatives to recruit students and mentors to participate in the program. They also assist the administrator to advertise upcoming group events. Finally, they are involved in the development of media and program advertising materials (e.g., program brochure and flyers).

Research

The research committee leads the evaluation component of the program. They coordinate initiatives to select, develop, and implement program measurement tools, and modify these measures as needed. They coordinate the collection and analysis of data, as well as aid in knowledge translation, such as the organization and preparation of posters and presentations for conferences, and manuscripts for publication in scholarly journals and parent-oriented publications.

Outreach

The outreach committee takes the lead on developing and coordinating initiatives to communicate and work together with other community partners to further the goals of the AMP. A more detailed description of these initiatives can be found in Chapter 12 of this manual.

Chapter Nine

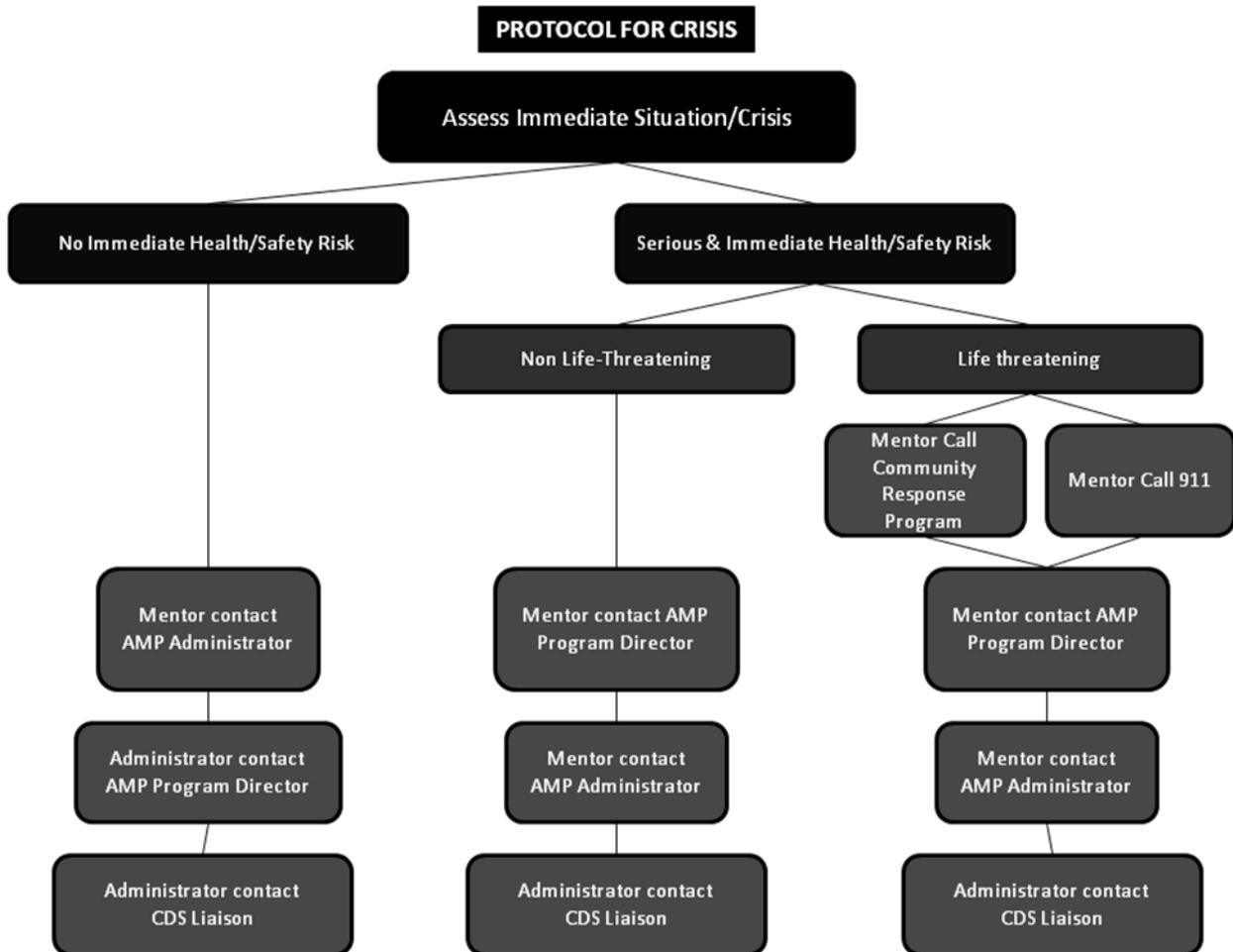
Protocol for Crisis

Lisa Hancock & Gayle Goldstein

Students with ASDs are at increased risk for other co-occurring psychiatric conditions and symptoms (Hofvander, Delorme, Chaste, Nyden, Wentz, Stahlberg, et al., 2009; Howlin, 2000). Therefore, it was necessary to develop a protocol in the event of a crisis situation. The purpose of the crisis protocol is to help the mentors anticipate potential difficulties and to provide some guidance on how those situations are to be handled. During their initial meetings with the CDS coordinator, and prior to their participation in the AMP, students provide information regarding their psychological and psychiatric history. Students are informed this information may be shared with the Program Supervisor of the AMP. Based on the initial confidentiality agreement signed by students participating in the AMP, students are informed that this information will be kept confidential and will only be shared with mentors on a case-by-case basis, at the discretion of the AMP Program Supervisor, or when needed to manage crises or emergencies. For example, personal student information may be disclosed to mentors when students are currently experiencing a time of crisis, sudden absenteeism from the program, or if a student is at risk for self-injurious or suicidal behaviour. Otherwise mentors and trainees may not be privy to this confidential information unless the students themselves disclose this information to their mentors.

The protocol for crisis is designed to provide mentors with a step-by-step procedure to follow in the event that they are unable to support the students' needs (Figure 1). The protocol requires the mentor to assess the problem on two dimensions. The first assessment determines if the problem poses an immediate health or safety risk. If the problem does pose a risk, the mentor must then assess if the risk is life threatening. The step-by-step protocol ensures that in every situation: a) the safety of the mentor and the student is ensured and that the student's needs are prioritized; b) the AMP Program Supervisor is contacted; c) the liaison at the CDS is contacted if necessary (to ensure the student's counsellor is aware of the issue); and d) there is complete follow-up regarding the problem or crisis.

Figure 1.



Chapter Ten

Ethical Considerations

Jessica Schroeder & Kristen McFee

Ethical Considerations

Although intended as an informal peer-to-peer support activity, and not explicitly as a clinical activity, many of the ethical considerations in running a program of this nature are similar to those that impact working with students in a clinical capacity within a university. This program is supervised by a psychologist registered with the College of Psychologists of Ontario and is currently being lead by students who are in a clinical psychology program that is accredited by the Canadian Psychological Association. As a result, the ethical standards that apply to this program are informed by the ethical codes of conduct of these governing bodies. These can be reviewed online at <http://www.cpo.on.ca> and <http://www.cpa.ca> (see the reference section for full citation). Ethical guidelines are likely to vary by region, so it is important to review documentation that is relevant to each particular region.

General ethical considerations that are of particular relevance to the program are discussed below. Many of these issues are summarized in the Privacy Guidelines document that is distributed to all students when they enter the program, and reviewed at the start of each year (see Appendix A). Chapter 13 reviews factors that were considered by the mentorship team when making decisions regarding several important ethical situations, including alcohol consumption at events and parental involvement.

Boundaries, Roles and Dual Relationships

Given the similarity in ages between the mentors and the students, clarification of the boundaries in the mentor/student relationship is critical. As the majority of students in the AMP are diagnosed with an ASD, it is not uncommon that they may struggle with the development and understanding of social relationships. The role of the mentor is discussed extensively during training, and is explained during the first session with students. Mentors are described as senior-level students who provide opportunities to practice social skills and guidance on matters related to navigating the academic and social expectations and challenges in the university setting. Mentors are contrasted from psychologists, psychiatrists and clinical counsellors in that mentors do not provide support for significant mental health issues. Mentors are similar to academic advisors in that they can provide advice about academic matters; however, they differ from academic advisors in that they are not experts on the details of academic requirements, registration matters, or accommodations that are available at the university. Their role is described as most similar to a “coach” -- a personal advisor on university and social concerns.

The distinction between a mentor and a friend is directly discussed during the first group session and boundaries are maintained by ensuring that mentors do not give personal information (i.e., phone number, email address, Facebook information, etc.). All email communication is done through a central email account, and emails are routed by the administrator to the

appropriate mentor. It is also made explicitly clear that dating or romantic relationships between mentors and students are not permitted. This is a particular issue in our program, where nearly all mentors are young women and the majority of students with AS have been male. No judgement is made about same or opposite sex relationships; simply that dating or outside socialization with mentors is not permitted. This is best discussed directly during the first session to avoid any confusion. In addition, the distinction between a mentor and a therapist is discussed. Mental health problems are beyond the scope of the program, and when evident, students are directed to the university psychiatric/disability services.

Confidentiality

When students enter the program, it is explained that issues discussed with mentors remain confidential, and the limits of that confidentiality, in accordance with the Ontario Mental Health act, are reviewed both verbally and in the Privacy Guidelines. In the province of Ontario these limitations include: when there is concern of harm to self or others, when there is concern about abuse by a regulated health care professional, and if records are subpoenaed by court order (CPO, 2005). The nature of the supervision structure is reviewed, and it is made explicit that discussion will occur about students during the mentors' group supervision meetings and individual mentor supervision.

It is also important to clarify with the CDS at the university regarding what will and will not be shared with the CDS counsellors. Students are informed about that agreement. Within our program it was decided that relevant medical and mental health information would be shared only between the CDS and the Program Supervisor, and relevant information would be shared with mentors on a need-to-know basis. Information gained during group and individual sessions is not shared with the CDS without written permission of the student. The exception to this is if there are mental health concerns, which are discussed with the CDS.

Storage of Files and Research Data

Students are informed that files will be stored in a secure location, with names detached from data, for a minimum period of 10 years after exiting the program and may be used for program evaluation purposes. This information is detailed in the Privacy Guidelines.

Personal Safety of Mentors

The personal safety of mentors is maintained, and boundaries are reinforced, by ensuring that there are at least two mentors present at group events. In addition, both the Program Supervisor and the administrator are informed about scheduled individual meetings, which are held on-campus. Personal information of mentors is not to be shared with any students, and student information (e.g., diagnosis, issues from individual meetings) is shared with other students only when there is consent to do so.

Chapter Eleven

Funding Considerations

James Bebko & Lisa Hancock

A university mentoring program such as AMP is a multi-layered effort that requires funding to provide the service and to determine its effectiveness. The components that we see as essential to the program, and therefore to the budget, are detailed in Appendix B. The largest component of the budget is the compensation for mentors. The Program Supervisor and the mentors together discussed what an appropriate level of compensation would be for the role of a mentor in our system. A consensus among our mentors was that it seemed reasonable to compensate each mentor at a rate of \$3 000 per year, per student they were mentoring, assuming the program were to receive full funding. If the program received partial funding, every effort would be made to approach that level of compensation by reducing activities in other areas of the budget. Of course, the result of such reallocation might mean that the program could not operate at its full capacity. This could also limit the program's self-evaluation, or sharing of resources through outreach efforts.

Included in the Curriculum Development, Program Evaluation and Dissemination of Findings headings of the budget are funds for outreach to regional high schools. The goal of this outreach is to assist in the development of similar programs at that level, as well as to increase awareness of the availability of the AMP at the university, and thereby facilitate the transition for those students attending our institution.

A mentoring program in the university or college context has several options for funding. One option is to try to operate the program using volunteer time. Depending on the size of the institution, there could be a number of students, both graduate and undergraduate, who would be interested in providing support to their fellow students, while gaining some experience in a mentoring capacity. However, a considerable time commitment is required for the program to be a success. Using our model, individual meetings and group events, the planning for these meetings, as well as organizing and purchasing materials and record-keeping, all represent demands on time for mentors.

For the program administrator, the time commitment is also significant, involving planning time, supervision of mentors, attendance at meetings to coordinate services with other campus service providers, coordination of communication, and a range of other activities. The volunteers would need to be highly committed for such an undertaking. In the first year of the

pilot program at York University, it was developed and conducted entirely on volunteer time. The full extent of the time required to implement the program was not yet well understood, and the number of students served was limited. As the required commitment became clearer and the program grew in size, the volunteer model was not seen as tenable going forward.

Most programs will require funding of one sort or another, either through existing student services at the institution, or through additional external funding. Programs at some universities, charge individual families a flat fee for their services (Poynter, 2008). Sample program fees range up to \$7000 per year per student (*cf.* www.collegewithasd.com/page1/page1.html). For the York University AMP, we decided to seek outside funding. The University's fund-raising arm was most helpful in approaching various private foundations for funding for the program. A rationale and description of the program was developed, along with a full budget. Our estimated timeframe to grow to what we considered to be full capacity was a three-year period, and the budget reflected that timeframe. Foundations and private donors with special interests in the ASD population, or interests in the counselling of university students, were the most receptive of the organizations approached. Partial funding received from several of these organizations enabled the program to continue beyond its pilot stages. Some understood the necessity of the various components of the program and agreed to fund the program as proposed. One source initially preferred to fund only the direct face-to-face time between mentors and students, although they came to understand the importance of the evaluation component, in order to determine the value and outcome of their funding.

The program has inherent appeal to potential funders. The central issue is the success of a group of students who are capable academically, but who have barriers to completion of their university degree. These barriers are associated with the interface between their challenges and the complex demands required in the post-secondary education environment. Much like students with learning disabilities, if the environment can be somewhat modified to represent less of a barrier to the students, and if, in turn, the students are supported in developing the skills needed to navigate the environment, the potential outcome is a win-win situation for all the stakeholders: the students, the University, and the funders.

In approaching funders, the quality and clarity of the application, and the rationale for the budget are critical. Where it is possible to meet with the funders, having a mentor present who provided his/her perspective on the day-to-day successes and challenges of the program offered critical insight that was of great interest to the funding bodies. Being able to articulate what the people "on the ground" actually experience, and the actual issues that are of concern to them and to the students they mentor, seemed very meaningful, and very much brought an abstract proposal to life.

Finally, long-term funding of the program is a concern. If external funding should lapse,

it may become necessary to move to a fee for service model, where families are asked to pay a flat rate for their student in order to maintain the program. As noted above, other programs have used this approach, but our hope is that fees would not be a barrier for students with Asperger Syndrome to participate in the mentorship program. If fees become a part of the program, then opportunities for subsidization must also be considered for less financially able students.

Chapter Twelve

Outreach Activities

Carly McMorris & James Bebko

There is an increasing need for specialized supports for students with AS. This is not only true in the university setting, but also before they reach university, and afterwards, as well as if they should choose a different route, such as employment. One of the key challenges for those with AS is transitions: specifically, transitions from high school to college or university, transitions from high school to employment, or transitions from university to employment. One of the central components of the AMP is an outreach program, for which we have teamed up with school boards and other service providers for those with AS.

We have begun several initiatives that are complementary to the AMP, the first of which has been promoting internal awareness within the university setting. Given the current and anticipated increase in the number of students self-identifying to the CDS at York, the mentorship program has been proactive, attempting to encourage new students to engage with the program by using posters and group emails to inform students of the program. Additionally, once students have self-identified to the CDS, counsellors provide information about the mentorship program, as well as try to arrange a one-to-one meeting in order for mentors to explain the program to students in more detail. Through campus-wide media releases, the mentorship program has attempted to inform individuals who are not current clients of the CDS about the program and how to get involved.

A second initiative has been to approach school boards, both to inform them about the AMP and also to try and establish partnerships to collaborate in forming or expanding on potential mentorship programs in the high schools. Many schools already have supports of various kinds, but there may be benefit in working together to consolidate efforts to optimally benefit students with AS.

A third initiative has involved representatives from the AMP meeting regularly with other community services that provide support for those with AS. The purpose of those meetings is to minimize duplication of services in the community and to optimize the reach of our coordinated efforts.

An example can help illustrate how a successful collaboration from the three above initiatives can occur. York University's AMP meets regularly with representatives of Autism Ontario, and the Asperger Society of Ontario (both parent advocacy groups), and a community service that provides critical job skills training and support, Jewish Vocational Services, to help

build support and formalize mentorship programs in the high schools. This collaboration has resulted in a pilot project with a regional school board, who promotes the same agenda internally, the Simcoe County District School Board. The goal of the pilot project is to provide necessary skills to students with AS so they can enhance their potential employability, or enhance their readiness for applying and adapting successfully to a university or college environment. This is being accomplished by offering students a coordinated series of high school courses, co-op work opportunities and early mentorship and social support activities to help the students develop critical skills in these areas.

A fourth initiative is closely related to the second and third. We see it as a role of the above collaboration, plus the AMP more generally, to help provide support to employers and other universities and colleges that are also working with individuals who have ASDs. Therefore these other organizations can be better prepared to receive students with AS, and, in the case of colleges and universities, to help prepare students to transition from those settings into the world of employment.

While each of these activities is separate from the mentorship part of the program, per se, it is seen as an important outreach component to help anticipate the needs of those with AS. In particular, not only for students' transition period out of high school, but also to help provide students with some of the skills that may enhance the likelihood of success. Our funders have been extremely supportive of this additional role and they provide us with the needed financial support in order to complete and expand these outreach initiatives.

Chapter Thirteen

Questions & Answers

Jessica Schroeder & Megan Ames

Below are some questions generated by the mentors of the AMP about issues that have arisen throughout the development and implementation of the program thus far. Answers are provided in a general manner in an attempt to address the presented issues. However, each situation with individual students is unique and therefore further supervision from the Program Supervisor should be requested as needed.

1) What is the involvement of the student's parents in the program?

In the Province of Ontario, the age of majority is 18 years. In addition, Ontario's *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* gives the right to consent to release personal information to those 16 years and older. Finally, according to policies of the College of Psychologists of Ontario, once a youth has reached 16 years of age, all communication between therapists and clients is confidential from parents. Given each of these age directives, and that there are some similarities between the role of a therapist and the role of a mentor, students' privacy is protected within the program. Exceptions might occur if the student is known to have been deemed not legally competent in the Province, but this is unlikely for a student in a university context. If parental involvement or communication with parents seems desirable in a particular situation, the possibility would be discussed with the student, and his/her wishes would be respected. This general topic is discussed with students on an individual basis.

2) How do we maintain the role distinction between clinician and mentor? How do we determine when the student should be referred to the CDS or mental health professionals?

Determining what is beyond the scope of the mentorship program is a frequently recurring point of discussion in group supervision, given that most mentors are part of a clinical psychology program and have experience in the assessment and treatment of mental health problems. Given that the students have access to psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health professionals through the university or through the health care system, it was determined that therapy is beyond the role of the mentor and that this would be a duplication of available services. Students are encouraged to speak with mentors about their mental health concerns and associated challenges should they wish to, but it is beyond the scope of the mentor's role to directly treat these concerns. At the onset of the program, the distinction between a mentor and a clinician is made. Students are encouraged to contact their CDS counsellor or to permit their mentor to do so, should mental health issues arise. When mental health issues arise, it is important that

the mentor relay this information to the Program Supervisor, either at group supervision, or individually.

3) What happens if a student tries to purchase or pay for a mentor's coffee, or bring a gift?

A card or a token gift is acceptable if of a relatively small monetary value. However, this should not be a recurrent issue. Mentors would explain that they are able to pay for their own coffee, but that they appreciate the gesture. This may also be an opportunity to reiterate their role as a mentor and that the program is a free service for students.

4) What do we say when a student asks if we are their “friends”?

The distinction between friends and mentors is reviewed with students at the start of the program (see Chapter 10). Personal information of mentors is not shared with students and mentors do not attend any non-AMP social events with the students (e.g., birthday parties, pub nights, student shows, etc.). We point out that while the topics that are discussed with AMP mentors may be similar to topics discussed with friends, the relationship with the mentor is generally quite one-sided and not reciprocal in nature. Mentors are encouraged to handle these situations with warmth, given that students with AS may have a particularly difficult time with this distinction.

5) What if a student asks to bring a friend to a mentorship meeting?

Typically bringing a friend would not be seen as consistent with the one-to-one nature of the program. However, the mentor would try to determine the motivation behind this question, as there are a number of possible factors. Does the student think that the friend would benefit from the program? Is the student seeking mentor support in facilitating the friendship? Is the student interested in showcasing the relationship developed with the mentor or the skills gained from the program? Or is it a matter of scheduling? Issues to consider are the impact of the 1:1 dynamic of adding a friend, the comfort level of the student, confidentiality and disclosure of diagnosis, and the potential benefit of an opportunity for live observation and practice of topics that have been discussed within the mentorship context. The final decision to invite a friend should include consultation with the Program Supervisor. If the student is interested in referring a friend to the program, a group event may be the best opportunity to become involved. The mentorship team could consult with the students about the possibility of a group event in which everyone is encouraged to bring a friend.

6) What if students forget money to attend an event or an individual meeting?

Costs of social events are typically covered by the program. Petty cash is available to students who forget to bring money for incidentals to the social events. However, if the student forgets to bring money more than once, this student is responsible for paying the program back and signing a form stating the amount they owe the mentorship program.

The student's individual mentor should remind the student about this arrangement and collect the money promptly. Spending money at individual meetings is optional, so if the student forgets to bring money, he/she would not purchase a beverage or other item. If costs are prohibitive to students, they would be encouraged to speak with their mentor to determine if alternative arrangements can be made.

7) How do we deal with the topic of alcohol consumption or substance use during group events or individual meetings?

The issue of whether or not to allow drinking at social outings by members of legal drinking age (which is currently 19 years in Ontario) should be discussed within the mentorship team before starting the program. Decisions regarding alcohol consumption at group events should be discussed with students at the first group event, and reiterated throughout the term. The potential liabilities should be discussed with the disability services at the institution, and with legal counsel of the university. Based on legal recommendations at our university, it was decided that drinking would be prohibited at all formal group events and meetings involving mentors. Students are welcome to coordinate their own events that may involve drinking, but these are not run as part of the mentorship program. This policy is discussed within the meetings. In addition, students are informed at the start of the program that if they attend a meeting under the influence of alcohol or other substances, they will be asked to leave the meeting.

8) What do we do if students express suicidal ideation or intent? (see Figure 1)

All students and mentors are provided with the business card of the local crisis hotline. Generally, students who are considered to be at risk for having suicidal ideation would be paired with senior-level mentors, who have received training on suicide risk assessment through coursework and clinical practica. If suicidal ideation comes up during a meeting or a group event, the mentor would inquire about suicidal intention, whether the student has a plan, the lethality of the plan, the frequency and intensity of the suicidal ideation, and any protective factors. If there is a minimal risk of suicide, this information is shared with the supervisor after the meeting has occurred. If the risk is moderate or serious, the Program Supervisor is contacted immediately, before the student leaves, to determine the best course of action. If the risk is serious and the mentor is unable to contact the Program Supervisor, the next contact is with the CDS directly. If mentors are unable to communicate with the supervisor or the CDS, then they are instructed to contact the police and to stay with the student until he/she is taken to the hospital. In all circumstances, careful documentation of what was discussed and the course of action taken is important.

9) Mentors and their students often talk about fairly personal and emotionally charged issues. How does a mentor appropriately respond to a student's emotionality (e.g., if the student begins to cry)?

At times, certain issues will arise within the individual meetings that may upset the student. It may be appropriate in that situation for the student to express sadness and perhaps cry. The primary role of the mentor is to comfort and console the student in these situations and accept that the student is upset. If this occurs in an inappropriate setting, the mentor may ask the student if they would like to go to the washroom or take a break from the meeting. If the mentor would like to discuss the appropriateness of crying in public with the student, it is best to bring this up at a subsequent meeting.

10) What are the boundaries regarding attendance and “no-shows”? How many missed meetings are acceptable?

Policies regarding missed meetings are reviewed with students at the start of the term. Students are encouraged to email the mentorship account at least 24 hours before cancellation. Mentors wait for students for 15 minutes and email the student as soon after the missed meeting to determine the cause of the missed meeting and to confirm the next meeting time. After two missed meetings, students are asked if they need to change their meeting time or their mentor. If attendance continues to be a concern (e.g., missing more than 3 appointments), taking a break or termination from the program are considered. These decisions should be made in consultation with the Program Supervisor and the CDS liaison. Personal considerations, such as family emergencies, examination schedules, and co-existing medical and mental health issues are taken into account and accommodated when possible.

11) What do we do if students ask for advice about sex and sexuality?

This is a delicate issue and should be handled in a respectful manner. Mentors are to express unconditional acceptance within the meetings and be available to provide information about safe sex, if required. Given the sensitivity of the topic, it is difficult to provide an algorithm for what to do in this situation as it would vary from student to student. If the student asks for specific help on a particular topic and the mentor is unsure of what is appropriate, the mentor may say that consultation is needed with a supervisor and get back to the student within a timely manner.

12) How do we handle conversations about religion/ethnicity?

Toronto is a culturally-diverse city, and as a result, there are a number of ethnic and religious backgrounds represented within the program. Mentors must be cognizant and respectful of how culture impacts the students. For example, some students have values that are consistent with more collectivist cultures, which must be taken into account when talking about issues of independence at university, romantic relationships, sexuality, and family responsibility. Another important consideration is that some students may have conflicting values, reflecting both their culture of origin and the Canadian culture, so it is important to consider each student’s situation individually. It is useful for mentors to do some background reading, take courses, and talk to others about a variety of religions and

ethnic cultures. It has been our experience that most students respond well when mentors or other students express genuine interest in learning more about their culture, should questions arise.

13) How does the AMP deal with students dating one another?

This issue has not arisen within our program thus far. However, it would not be inappropriate for students to begin dating through the program, as they may be meeting individuals within the program with whom they share interests. Mentors should keep their roles as individual mentors with each student separate. If these students act inappropriately at group meetings and make others feel uncomfortable, it may be necessary for each of the students' mentors to talk to them individually and privately about this matter.

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APPENDIX A: Privacy Guidelines Handout for Students

Privacy Guidelines of the Asperger Mentorship Program-York University

- Files specific to the AMP are stored by the AMP coordinators in a locked storage unit. These files are only accessible to project personnel. These files include: initial interviews, intake surveys, brief reports from group events and individual meetings, event planning forms, and event evaluation forms.
- In accordance with the policies of the College of Psychologists of Ontario, student files will be kept for a minimum of 10 years after exiting the AMP.
- Full names are kept in a file separate from data.
- Clinical summaries or research projects may be conducted as part of the AMP, without additional consent, if they are based on existing data or with additional specific consent if the research project is not part of the regular functioning of the AMP.
- Any presentations or publications resulting from the AMP will not include any identifying information.
- With written permission from students, information from CDS files may be shared with the Program Supervisor. The Program Supervisor may share this information with mentors when relevant.
- With written permission from students, information collected through the AMP may be shared with the CDS program.
- Students are discussed by mentors and the Program Supervisor at group supervision meetings and during individual supervision.
- Email exchanges among students and the AMP mentors are stored in a separate password-protected email account accessible only by mentors and the Program Supervisor. Students and mentors are reminded that email is not a fully secure means of communication.

Limits of confidentiality:

- All information will be kept confidential.
- Exceptions to confidentiality are the following:
 1. When the safety of the student or others are in question.

2. If records are subpoenaed through the legal system.
3. Reports of abuse by a regulated health care practitioner, which must be reported to their regulating body.
4. If the AMP is audited by York University's privacy officer.
5. When otherwise required by law.

APPENDIX B: The Asperger Mentorship Program Budget

Table 1

Components Included in the Budget

<i>Yearly Expenses</i>	<i>Yearly Amount</i>
25 mentors (stipend of \$3,000 per mentor)	\$75,000
Curriculum development and training of mentors	\$15,000
Group Activities and outings	\$2,500
Public transportation for outings	\$1,500
Program Evaluation	\$17,500
Dissemination of research findings	\$10,000
Course release for supervising faculty member/project coordinator	\$12,500
Incidentals	\$3,000
Total Expense	\$137,000