

Getting to Know UChicago Peer Guide Program Roles and Responsibilities

What does a Peer Guide do?

The purpose of a Peer Guide is to help a new hire feel welcome and become a contributing member to the organization. A Peer Guide helps reduce new hire uncertainty by being available to answer immediate or routine questions which will help him or her become more acclimated in his/her new role in a shorter period of time. A Peer Guide can suggest experiences and provide information to help the new hire become an "insider." Confidentiality must be maintained between the Peer Guide and the new hire at all times.

How is a Peer Guide assignment structured?

A Peer Guide is generally expected to establish rapport with the new hire, meet face-to-face with him or her for 30 minutes weekly during working hours for a defined time period, usually three months, and answer questions he/she may have.

Who is a successful Peer Guide?

To be a Peer Guide, an employee should know and be committed to the department, familiar with policies, practices and organizational culture of the department and the University, have good interpersonal skills, be a respected performer and role model, be a peer of the new hire, and want to help. A Peer Guide should have or be given time to support the new hire. If either the Peer Guide or the new hire is not experiencing a positive relationship, both have the option of selecting another partner and are to contact the Department's Human Resources Administrator (HRA).

Benefits

- Provides a resource for new hires to ask questions they are uncomfortable asking their supervisors.
- Offers a growth/developmental opportunity for higher performers.
- Provides an opportunity for current employees to transfer accumulated knowledge and experience of the organization and the culture.
- Allows the new hire to learn the organization in a timely and personal fashion.
- Allows immediate supervisor to focus on the new hire's career growth and job responsibilities.
- Provides additional resources within department to answer routine questions.

What a new hire can expect from his/her Peer Guide

- Assistance in understanding the culture of the organization.
- Assistance in building networks and insight into how to make them more productive and effective.
- Being available to the new hire by telephone, e-mail, and in person.

Role of the Peer Guide

- Welcome the new hire personally on his/her first day and be involved in his or her introductions to the physical environment, (ex: lunch room, bathroom, supplies, etc.) and the department. Establish rapport by talking with the new hire about his or her questions and by providing information about how things are done successfully within the department.
- Set a time for the first meeting (within the first week of employment would be desirable).
- Explain to the new hire when is and isn't a good time to contact you.
- Escort new hire to Getting to Know UChicago Orientation.
- Walk new hire to Library or Medical Center to obtain ID.
- Customize experiences to the new hire's needs and interests; help the new hire to apply his or her learning and experiences to the realities of the department.
- Provide a campus tour, make introductions to other members of the University community outside of their own department, and assist with becoming familiar with department activities, University activities and events, etc.
- Meet on a relatively frequent basis (at least monthly) for the first three months of the new hire's tenure to discuss the new hire's experience and to address any concerns or issues that the new hire may have.
- Ensure the new hire is feeling productive and effective in their position.
- Encourage the new hire to maintain an open dialogue with his/her immediate supervisor.
- Be positive and encouraging.
- Maintain confidentiality.

Peer Guides do not answer questions related to employment conditions, work assignments, performance, conduct, leave, career opportunities, and other areas for which the new hire's supervisor or manager is responsible. In addition, Peer Guides should not give approval for time and attendance requests.

Tips for the Peer Guide

- Be patient and positive. Don't try to cover everything right away.
- Be supportive of the organization and employees at all times.
- Listening is very important (sometimes more important than giving advice).
- Don't try to force a relationship; it takes time.
- Look for a preferred communication style from the new hire.
- Don't be judgmental.
- Discourage gossip and speculation.

Tips for the New Hire

- Allow your Peer Guide to share his/her knowledge of what's 'normal' in the organization, e.g. what's 'right' and 'wrong' here, what's expected of me, what's the organization's culture?
- Contact your Peer Guide during the day when he/she has indicated they are available to answer your urgent questions or issues. Use your discretion at all times.
- Try to meet regularly (at least monthly) for the first three months.
- Respect your Peer Guide's ground rules regarding contact outside working hours.
- Accept constructive criticism
- Maintain confidentiality.

Difference between a Peer Guide, Coaching and Mentoring Program:

- Peer Guide Program – seeks to provide one point of access to operational information that is necessary for the new hire to fulfill his/her role in the organization.
- Coaching Program – seeks to increase the employee's job-related skills. If you feel the new hire's questions are job or skilled related, refer him/her to supervisor.
- Mentoring Program – seeks to assist the individual with their professional and personal development. A mentor is typically someone with a great deal of experience.