

# Developing a mentoring process for advancing women in coaching

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Purpose: To explore women coaches' experiences in, and outcomes from, a women in coaching mentorship program

## Introduction:

### Landscape of women in coaching

- Less than 25% of all coaches in the Canadian sport system are women (Government of Canada, 2018)
- At both the university and national levels, women coaches make up only 16% of all head coaches (Norman, Donnelly, & Kidd, 2017)
- Internationally, only 9% of accredited Australian coaches at the Rio 2016 Olympics were female and the number of active female coaches in the United Kingdom's sport system is 30% (Coaching Insights 2016; Sport Australia, 2017)

### Mentorship as a key strategy for supporting women

- Mentorship has served to help advance women's careers in non-sport sectors such as business, medicine, law, engineering, and higher education (Foust-Cummings, Dinolfo, & Kohler, 2011)
- Mentorship programs also exist for women coaches in sport domain (e.g. CAO Changing the Game mentorship program)

## Methods:

- Multi-methods design to explore the responses of mentee and mentor coaches from a women in coaching pilot mentorship program

### Women in coaching pilot mentorship program

- Funded by Status of Women Canada and developed through a collaboration between CAAWS, CAC, and University of Toronto
- Program was theoretically grounded using Zachary's (2009, 2012) model for building effective mentoring relationships
- Main activities of program included: mentor/mentee workbooks; mentor/mentee in-person training workshop; 12 month mentoring relationship; regular communication; lead mentors; online educational webinars; closure meeting with mentor/mentee

#### Phase I:

- Online surveys distributed at 4, 8, and 12 month marks of program to male (n=3) and female (n=4) mentor coaches and 8 female mentee coaches
- Questions explored frequency/forms of contact between mentee/mentor, success and challenges experienced, perceived changes to coaching skills and self, and additional supports required

#### Phase II:

- In-depth semi-structured interviews with 6 mentor coaches (3 male and 3 female) and 7 female mentee coaches conducted by phone
- Questions explored what and how coaches learned over the course of the program

Survey data were analyzed descriptively and interview data were subjected to an inductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006)



## Findings:

### 1) Mentorship supports

"... she was able to come into my coaching scene and spend a few hours, maybe twice a month... we interacted and spoke and then she asked a lot of good questions... I feel like that led to [her] growth."

- Mentor coach

### 2) Impact of mentorship

"... how to have difficult conversations and build communication with my athletes"

- Mentee coach

"[My mentor] was really helpful when I wasn't taking care of myself, it was amazing because he helped me through that and helped me find that balance..."

- Mentee coach

### 3) Quality attributes of mentorship

"The biggest thing for me was understanding what a mentor was..."

-Mentor coach

"Number one is the meetings, the face-to-face meetings [with my mentee]..."

-Mentor coach



## Discussion:

- Based on study findings a six-step mentoring process for effectively advancing women in coaching is proposed and includes the following six steps:

### 1) Assess readiness

- Understand what mentorship involves, if it is right for you, and whether you are ready to be a mentor/mentee

### 2) Prepare

- Build self-awareness through self-assessment, identify areas for growth, learn strategies to be an effective mentor/mentee

### 3) Set the stage

- Develop and set goals to achieve mentee's vision, create a mentorship plan, identify appropriate relationship boundaries, clarify roles of the mentee and mentor

### 4) Develop together

- Engage in reflection and ongoing assessment, ongoing communication, manage and troubleshoot conflict or challenges

### 5) Wrap up

- Assess goal attainment and personal and professional development, celebrate the mentorship experience, share your experience and success with other

### 6) Evaluate and plan next steps

- Evaluate the mentorship and relationship, think ahead and embrace lifelong learning, engage in future mentoring

This process model has been used to inform three *Mentorship Guides* (one each for the mentor, mentee, and sport administrator) that inform the effective mentoring of women in coaching. The *Guides* can be accessed via the CAC website or the following link:

<https://www.coach.ca/cac-caaws-female-coach-mentorship-project-p160470>