



UBC Interprofessional Health Mentors Program - Information for Potential Applicants -

1. What is the UBC Interprofessional Health Mentors Program?

The Health Mentors Program is an educational initiative at UBC, coordinated by the Patient & Community Partnership for Education in the Office of UBC Health. Teams of four students from different disciplines learn **together, from, and with** a mentor. Over the 9-month program, each student team visits their mentor seven times, with each session focused on specific learning objectives. The program runs from October 2026 to May 2027, and includes approximately 48 health mentors and 175 students from eleven different health and human service programs. Students are considered volunteers, but receive academic credit for their participation.

2. Who are the Health Mentors?

Health Mentors are adult patients or clients living with a chronic condition or disability, or caregivers who provide long-term support to a loved one. Mentors are considered “experts” in their own lives and experiences, and play a key role in helping students learn how health care providers can better support individuals with chronic conditions or their caregivers. Mentors will teach students about their experiences, such as their views on the health care system, their interactions with health care professionals, and possibly what it’s like caring for someone with a chronic illness and/or disability.

3. What do Health Mentors do?

Health Mentors are expected to take part in all program activities:

- Orientation (3 hours)
 - Orientation for students and mentors will take place in the fall and will provide detailed information about the program.
 - The orientation will begin with a one hour pre-meeting for mentors and faculty supervisors only, which will include an opportunity to hear from past mentors.
 - Each team (four students and one mentor) will meet to get to know each other, discuss ground rules, such as confidentiality and disclosure, plan how they will work together, and fix a date for their next meeting.
- Visits/Learning Sessions with Health Mentors (five meetings x two hours = 10 hours total)
 - There will be five sessions and each session will focus on a broad cluster of topics. There will be two related topics per term, for example, “chronic disease/disability and its everyday management” and “experiences with the health care system”.
 - Groups will receive a set of questions and tasks to guide the discussions at each session. In addition, everyone will be encouraged to bring their own questions to the table. The session should be a true discussion, not just the students interviewing the mentor.
 - Groups will be responsible for scheduling the time and place of sessions. We expect that most sessions will occur out of scheduled class time (i.e. 5-7 pm) and off campus at a location convenient to the health mentor (community organization or centre etc.). Home visits may be arranged where appropriate and agreed to by all group members. Depending on the health mentor and groups’ preferences, meetings may take place virtually or in person.



- Symposium (four hours)
 - At the end of the year, after four sessions, the group will meet for two hours to prepare a poster or storyboard, summarizing the story of their learning journey together. It should include the most important events, discoveries, and the questions that remain unanswered.
 - There will be a symposium in March where groups will share their learning experiences; posters will be used as “conversation pieces” to engage with fellow groups and faculty supervisors.
 - The first hour of the symposium will be a “closed” session for program participants only and the second hour will be open to all students and faculty.
 - Learnings from the symposium are expected to inform group discussions in the remaining two sessions of the program.
 - The symposium has been held mostly in person, with virtual attendance offered in particular cases when necessary.

4. Possible topic clusters for discussion are as follows:

(In no particular sequence)

- Words and meanings
 - Discussion of terms such as health, disease, disability, patients, clients, consumers, coping, normality, recovery, and self-management – looking at the importance of the meaning we give to words. Mentors can discuss their experiences of stigma, stereotypes, and culture and generational differences.
- Living with chronic disease/disability and its management
 - The medical journey of the Mentor. What’s involved in managing chronic illness/disability? What is the role of informal and formal (professional) care providers? Make a map of the mentor’s care team (i.e. family, friends, health providers etc.).
- Managing everyday life with a chronic condition
 - How does the mentor manage everyday life? For example, money, work, social relationships, home, and family. Competition of resources: so much time, energy, and money spent – how do you achieve a balance? Compare to how students manage their lives.
- Experiences with the health care system
 - Treatments and their effects, including side effects. Factors that influence the care the mentors receive – barriers to access etc. Examination of an example from the mentor’s experience. Review of the mentor’s care plan. What works and what could make a difference?
- Finding, managing, and sharing health information
 - Group explores how they each find and share health information. Internet, social networking, peer support, and community resources. What is expertise? Is it information, knowledge, and power?
- Partnerships, collaboration, shared decision making, and the future
 - What does it mean to work in partnership with patients and with other health professionals? How are decisions made? How is patient autonomy enhanced or not? How can we improve communication and collaboration? Looking to the future – as



well as dealing with uncertainty say around the course of illness – how will we grow as people and professionals?

5. Why would someone want to be a health mentor?

Health mentors have an opportunity to play an important role in the education of future health professionals. Mentors will work with a group of students in the early formative stages of their education and development as future health professionals. The important educational contribution by mentors will be formally recognized through certificates of participation and a concluding reception. (Mentors will have their travel expenses for the orientation and symposium events reimbursed.)

6. How are Health Mentors prepared and supported?

Health mentors will attend an orientation with their team of students to get details on the program. They will receive a handbook with guidelines and instructions on their roles and tasks. Mentors will also be provided with a detailed session outline, including learning objectives. Mentors will also have the opportunity to attend an optional mentor support group meeting mid-way through the program. This event provides an opportunity for mentors to meet and learn from one another, as well as receive feedback from the program coordinators and get any questions they may have answered.

In addition, mentors will be given the contact number of a person that they can go to with any questions and/or concerns at any point during the program.

The health care of mentors will not be affected by participation in the program. The information health mentors share with students and supervisors will remain confidential.

7. What are some characteristics of the “ideal” mentor?

- Interested in and responsive to students; willing to answer students’ questions and help them reframe questions that may be too probing.
- Have several years of experience in managing their condition/disability.
- Have had interactions with a variety of health care professionals.
- Responsible and able to commit to the time requirements of the 9 month program.
- Respectful of confidentiality, including the names of other patients, clinicians, and locations etc.; respectful of differences among individuals (i.e. gender, age, sexual orientation, and cultural beliefs etc.).
- Thoughtful about the issues, backgrounds, and histories brought to the experience.
- Participation without a personal “agenda” – without a single purpose in mind. Careful to relate both positive and negative experiences, but in the spirit of helping to educate a future generation of health professionals. Interested in helping students think of ways they could make things better in the future.
- For caregiver mentors: you are able to obtain the written agreement (assent) from your loved one to participate in the Health Mentors Program.



8. How are Health Mentors selected?

Firstly, complete an application form, including the information for at least two references (work, professional, volunteer, or character). Based on the number of applicants and information we receive, we will shortlist candidates for an interview with two members of our steering committee (a community member/health mentor and a UBC student). We expect to make provisional offers by the end of August. However, the final number of mentors we are able to accept depends on the number of students who enroll in the program. Student enrollment is confirmed in early September, and we anticipate finalizing mentor participation shortly thereafter. Some mentors may be asked to be mentors in waiting or put on a waitlist.

Please contact Program Coordinator Betsa Parsa for more information:

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