

ICF FAQ: Making Sense of Mentor Coaching

Abby Tripp Heverin

For coaches pursuing an ICF Credential, receiving Mentor Coaching (either as an independently contracted service or through an ICF ACTP) is nonnegotiable. However, it's also a process that raises numerous questions, for credentialing candidates and members of the professional coaching community at large. ICF's Assistant Executive Director George Rogers, who coordinates staff and member activities around credentialing in service of ICF's world-class standards system, took the time to provide some key insights into the meaning of Mentor Coaching as applied to ICF's policies and practices.

Q: How does ICF define Mentor Coaching?

A: For the purposes of the ICF Credentialing process, Mentor Coaching is defined as providing professional assistance in achieving and demonstrating the levels of coaching competency demanded by the ICF Credential level sought by the coach-applicant.

Lectures and classroom activities are only part of the learning equation. The ICF believes that, in order to be effective, initial coach training and continuing professional education should include opportunities for individual practice, reflection and learning with the support of a skilled observer providing feedback. This is the role of the Mentor Coach. (We've outlined the key duties and competencies of a Mentor Coach on the ICF website.)

Q: How does Mentor Coaching differ from mentoring?

A: The ICF subscribes to the definition of a mentor as an expert who provides wisdom and guidance based on his or her own experience. A Mentor Coach, on the other hand, provides feedback and assessment based on the ICF Core Competencies.

Q: How do Mentor Coaching and coaching supervision differ?

A: The ICF defines coaching supervision as the interaction that occurs when a coach periodically brings his or her coaching work experiences to a coaching supervisor in order to engage in reflective dialogue and collaborative learning for the development and benefit of the coach and his or her clients.

Whereas Mentor Coaching focuses on the development of coaching skills, coaching supervision offers a broader opportunity for support and development, enabling to coach to focus more on what is going on in his process and/or relationship with clients.

As the coaching profession grows and matures, there is an increasing amount of emphasis placed on the value of coaching supervision to coaches, clients and the integrity of the profession itself. Recognizing this trend, a variety of ICF work groups have held discussions with the intent of defining and establishing a clear position regarding coaching supervision.

These conversations are ongoing, and I anticipate that they'll evolve right along with the profession.

Q: Why is Mentor Coaching a fee-based service, instead of a pro bono service allowing coaches to give back to their peers?

A: The ICF does not regulate the marketing and delivery of Mentor Coaching services. When we determined that working with a Mentor Coach is the best way for people to learn, the market stepped in and developed the business around Mentor Coaching.

Like the decision to pursue coach training, we see Mentor Coaching as an investment of time and money that practitioners make in themselves and their careers. Many ICF Credentialing candidates have found group coaching to be more affordable than one-on-one delivery, and our policy dictates that they may count a maximum of seven hours of group coaching toward their 10-hour Mentor Coaching requirement.

Q: How do I find a Mentor Coach?

A: If you are at the beginning of your coaching journey, one of the best ways to complete the requisite Mentor Coaching hours required for the ICF Credential is to complete an ACTP. The ICF requires programs with this designation to build 10 hours of Mentor Coaching (with at least three of those delivered one-on-one) into their curricula. Many ACSTH programs also offer Mentor Coaching, although they are not required to do so. (Check with an individual program to learn more about what it does and does not offer.)

At the end of this year, the ICF will launch its Mentor Coach Registry as another way for coaches to find ICF Credential-holders who offer Mentor Coaching as part of their practices. Mentor Coaches will pay a fee to be listed in the MCR, but the service (structured as a searchable list) will be free to users seeking a Mentor Coach.

Abby Tripp Heverin is the Communications Coordinator for the International Coach Federation. She oversees content development for Coaching World, in addition to helping implement the ICF's public relations strategy. If you're interested in contributing to a future issue of Coaching World, email her at abby.heverin@coachfederation.org.

This article was originally posted on the [International Coach Federation Blog](#).
