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My first mentor was my father, a pediatrician in private practice in Iowa. Other mentors were clinicians and advisors, who encouraged me during my residency. My friend and career mentor, Dan Plunket, MD, FAAP, demonstrated teaching, clinical, and relationship building skills that have guided me for years. I try to emulate those qualities while mentoring students, residents, young faculty, and pediatricians new to our Tulsa, OK community. Mentoring within the AAP should focus on clinical and business needs of private practices, while fostering alignment between members in private practices and in academics, centering on connecting experienced members with newer members looking for ideas and advice.

A mentor supports another individual or group of individuals as they pursue common goals. Mentoring often is simply leading by example. Good mentors engage others through active listening, encouraging ideas, and by offering suggestions that are designed to support and energize another person. The AAP is a great resource for finding mentors among its many members, and can serve as an organizational mentor by listening to many opinions while guiding members' best ideas into policies and guidelines.

The AAP should continue to engage our trainees and young physicians, facilitating the acquisition of knowledge in medicine, business, policies, and politics. While advocating for children, the AAP supports members in practice settings through email list-servs, task forces, sections and other activities. Providing a way for pediatricians to learn about practice management from experienced and successful practitioners is important. The AAP continues to support senior pediatricians, many of whom can use their practice or academic experiences to mentor a new FAAP entering practice or academics.

The AAP can facilitate the development of mentors through a task force, section or council on mentoring. A task force could design methods for connecting interested members with a mentor in their area of interest. I suggest inviting a young physician to observe committee or section executive committee meetings to connect with leaders who might become mentors. Using new technologies, we can support mentor/mentee pairs across time and space, generating, developing, and reviewing ideas. AAP resources can support mentoring program evaluation and improvement.