



University of Pennsylvania
Penn Pal Program for
New Staff Members

Managers: Customize this program to best meet your needs. The specifics of the program will vary from each school or center.

Purpose

This document is designed to provide a model for managers who wish to implement a Penn Pal program as part of their onboarding process.

The Penn Pal Program for New Staff Members is a temporary arrangement, lasting 30-60 days, between a new staff member and a qualified, peer in the school or center.

Since the first few days or weeks for a new staff member may be filled with questions and some uncertainty, the Penn Pal Program will:

- Provide the new staff member with a feeling of acceptance and belonging by building an immediate personal connection
- Respond to relatively straightforward queries regarding basic operational issues in a timely, non-bureaucratic manner from a single point of contact
- Connect the new staff member to a peer in a non-supervisory setting while becoming acquainted to the school or center and the University in an informal capacity
- Allow the manager to focus on valuable role and performance aspects rather than low-

level operational issues during the new staff member's first few weeks at Penn.

Benefits

Penn Pal	New Staff Member	Penn
Recognition as a strong performer	One-on-one assistance; single point of contact	Increased employee engagement and retention
Opportunity to motivate others	Jump-start on networking at Penn	Increased communication among staff
Increased self-esteem and confidence	Inside knowledge of how things "get done or should be done" at Penn	Enhanced employee development
Preparation for future leadership role	A smooth acclimation period in a supportive and low-risk environment	Increased employee productivity

Using the program is a means of welcoming and encouraging new staff members and to help them acclimate more quickly to Penn.

Step-by-Step Process

Manager

1. Use this model to meet the needs of individual school or center.
2. Ensure that the Penn Pal program includes buy-in from management and other staff members.
3. Select Penn Pals based on specific criteria.
4. Assign the new staff member a Penn Pal in his or her own school or center.
5. Conduct a meeting with the Penn Pal to review roles and responsibilities for the specific new staff member.
6. Explain the Penn Pal program to the new staff member.
7. Make the introduction between the Penn Pal and the new staff member the first day.

Penn Pal

8. Set up the initial meeting with the new staff member to talk about established agreed ground rules.
9. Continued contact occurs over the next 30-60 days, or as decided by the manager.
10. Complete evaluation after the program is concluded.

Selection of Penn Pals

The manager will select Penn Pals on the basis of these criteria. The Penn Pal is:

- Committed to the University at all levels and understands Penn culture.
- Knowledgeable of the appropriate points of contact and location of resources in the school or center and the University.

- Familiar with the day-to-day operations of the school or center; in position at least one year or more.
- Able to provide the time to the new staff member.
- Interested in serving as a Penn Pal.
- Not in the performance improvement process.

Key Characteristics of a Penn Pal

Communicator: A Penn Pal should encourage open communication. The Penn Pal should provide relevant information to the new staff and encourage a process of continued, self-directed learning.

Role Model: A Penn Pal should be a model staff member and exemplify all Penn values. The Penn Pal should lead by example.

Motivator: The Penn Pal should have a positive outlook on his or her work and use that perspective to help build self-confidence and loyalty in the new staff member.

Strong Performer: The Penn Pal can help guide the new staff member in many situations based on experience and knowledge obtained in the work environment.

What a Penn Pal Is Not

A Penn Pal is not a mentor who supports a staff member's career growth or a coach who works with the staff member's job skills or in any way is a substitute for the managerial role.

The Penn Pal is not responsible for the new staff member's professional development. A Penn Pal is not meant to replace formal training processes.

A Penn Pal is not responsible for directing the new staff member on any projects or work-related tasks or attempt to resolve any conflicts which may arise.

Expectations

- Discussions between the Penn Pal and the new staff member should be confidential.
- The Penn Pal agrees to be supportive of the University and their coworkers.
- Primary concerns are the specific needs of that particular new staff member.
- If the Penn Pal is having any trouble with the interpretation of their role, or with any aspect of the Penn Pal relationship, the Penn Pal will contact the manager.

Penn Pals help show the new staff member "the ropes."

Penn Pals support the new staff member. They care about this person and want them to experience success in the new job.

They practice inclusion by taking a break or meal with the new person.

They share their experience and knowledge in a friendly and informal way.

They make sure that the new staff member knows he or she can contact them at any time.

Buddies reinforce a positive work environment and organizational culture.

Roles and Responsibilities

Manager	Penn Pal (refer to checklist)	New Staff Member
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify possible Penn Pals based on the key characteristics required (page 2). Discuss the benefits with those individuals identified and obtain their interest level to become a Penn Pal. 2. Assign the Penn Pal prior to the new staff member's arrival. Provide the Penn Pal with the new staff member's contact information. 3. Conduct a meeting with the Penn Pal to review roles and responsibilities and the checklist. See Penn Pal Checklist. 4. Set the tone for the new staff member by personally explaining how the Penn Pal Program works. 5. Introduce the new staff member to their Penn Pal on the first day. 6. Give the Penn Pal the time to support the new staff member. 7. Follow up with Penn Pal to review any needs or concerns. 8. Consider feedback and make enhancements if necessary. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with the manager to discuss Penn Pal program prior to the new staff member's start date. 2. Provide guidance and encouragement to the assigned new staff member for the first 30-60 days of employment, or longer. 3. Establish rapport with the new staff member, meet face-to-face with him or her as determined, (during working hours) and answer telephone or electronically conveyed questions from them immediately. 4. Help the new staff member integrate with the school or center and the University by being a non-threatening contact on internal policies, procedures, work rules, customs, etc. 5. Provide the new staff member with a point of contact for general queries regarding day-to-day operational issues such as codes for the copy machine, location of an office or building, locating information on the Penn web site. 6. Listen and respond in a confidential, supportive manner. 7. If the new staff member's queries are too complex, direct them to the manager. 8. Discourage gossip and speculation within a Penn Pal relationship. 9. Complete the Penn Pal evaluation at the end of the program. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Meet with the manager to review Penn Pal guidelines. 2. Coordinate with the Penn Pal when and how often meetings will take place. 3. Listen and accept information and feedback willingly. 4. Ask questions; maintain open lines of communication with Penn Pal to support the program's effectiveness. 5. Complete the Penn Pal evaluation at the end of the program.

First Meeting

The first meeting between the Penn Pal and the new staff member should be introductory in nature and in an informal setting.

Show interest in the new staff member by asking about the new staff member's past experience, education, likes and interests.

Tell the new staff member your job duties, tenure at Penn, past experience, education, likes, and interests.

Together, discuss or convey these ground rules:

- Frequency of scheduled meetings
- Length of regularly scheduled meeting (for 10-20 minutes, once a week during the first month, more frequently if necessary)
- The preferred method of contact (in person, email, instant messaging, phone).
- Your availability.
- Meetings will be held during working hours.
- Non-urgent issues should be left until scheduled meeting times, but anything that is materially hindering performance or work can be discussed with you immediately.

Penn Pal Tips

- Don't worry about being perceived as the expert. Focus your attention on the new staff member.

- Be patient; it takes time to develop a professional relationship. Don't try to cover everything in one day.
- Don't try to force a relationship.
- Be positive; maintain a good attitude.
- Try to identify the new staff member's personality and communication style and adapt accordingly.
- Don't be judgmental; simply offer feedback.
- Follow-up daily by asking, "How are things going?" or "What can I help you with today?"
- Encourage continued, open communication.
- It may be reasonable to expect as many as four – five brief inquiries each day during the first few weeks, decreasing thereafter. Although all new staff members have different learning curves and needs, you may hear little or nothing from them after a few weeks. This is a good sign! If you still get a large number of urgent queries after the first month, you should speak to your manager for advice.

Concluding the Relationship

The relationship between the Penn Pal and the new staff member will end if either:

- Determined number of days pass, or
- The Penn Pal or the new staff member so requests.

Penn Pal Checklist

BEFORE THE NEW STAFF MEMBER STARTS

- Review your specific responsibilities with manager before arrival
- Find out the date of the new staff member's orientation program and be present at the start of the program s/he attends.
- Arrange a welcoming event on the new staff member's first day as your manager or supervisor identifies as appropriate (e.g., welcome sign, refreshments).
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FIRST WEEK

- Meet with the new staff member to discuss your role as their Penn Pal. If possible, arrange a lunch meeting the first or second day.
- Introduce the new staff member to others in the school or center.
- Explain where and how to enter the premises, including an explanation of after-hours procedures.
- Tour the campus or department facilities, including meeting rooms, mail room, copy machines, break areas, restrooms, vending areas, other areas of interest.
- Explain department customs such as how birthdays and special events might be recognized, office socials, etc.
- Provide such tips or insights about "how things are done" in the department.
- Ask other staff members in the area to take the new staff member for coffee or lunch during the first week or two of work.
- Suggest places available for breaks and lunches.
- Assist the new staff member with understanding acronyms typically used in the department and at Penn.
- Assist in setting up voicemail message, how to answer the phone, how to place an internal and external call; Outlook signature (or other email brand).
- Help to order business cards (if applicable).
- Show how to scan, fax, use copier.
- Review Profiler, Knowledge Link.
- Review safety procedures (Shelter in place, UPennAlert, any others).
- Show how to sign-up for e-newsletters, Penn communications.
- Assist new staff member in the desk/office area set-up, including location of supplies, desk accessories,, etc., and/or how to order them.
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ON-GOING (30-60 DAYS)

- Assist new staff member with any questions; have informal "check-ins" to see "how it's going."
- Continue to help the new staff member with above items on this checklist.
- Introduce the new staff member to staff members across campus with which he or she may have frequent interactions or working relationships.
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Evaluation of the Penn Pal Program

At the conclusion of the Penn Pal program, the Penn Pal and new staff member will be asked to complete a brief questionnaire aimed at improving the program. It doesn't involve the issues discussed between the Penn Pal and the new staff member.

Sample Evaluation

Thank you for participating in the Penn Pal Program. This brief evaluation is intended to help us in our efforts to have the most effective Program that will meet everyone's needs. Your response is confidential and will be used to review and improve the Penn Pal Program.

Your Penn Pal Experience		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1	My overall experience of this program was positive.	<input type="radio"/>				
2	I was adequately briefed regarding my role in the program.	<input type="radio"/>				
3	I felt welcomed as a new staff member.	<input type="radio"/>				
4	I would have liked the program to last longer.	<input type="radio"/>				
5	I would have liked the program to end sooner.	<input type="radio"/>				
6	The program length was just right.	<input type="radio"/>				
7	I felt having [a Penn Pal or a being a Penn Pal] was a rewarding experience.	<input type="radio"/>				
		Not Likely at All		Neutral		Extremely Likely
8	I would recommend this program to others.	<input type="radio"/>				
9	Describe the nature and frequency of the communication you've had with [your Penn Pal or the new staff member].					
10	How would you improve or change the program?					
11	How or why has this program been helpful to you as a Penn Pal or new staff member?					
12	I was the Penn Pal <input type="radio"/> I was the new staff member <input type="radio"/>					