

Introduction to

ICF Mentor Coaching Specializations (MCS)



Elevating mentor coaching to advance coaching practice.



[coachingfederation.org](https://www.coachingfederation.org)

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Introduction

Mentor coaching isn't simply an extension of great coaching. It's a discipline of its own. It requires skilled observation, thoughtful feedback, and a deep understanding of how coaching competence develops over time.

For years, mentor coaches around the world have played a critical role in shaping the quality and credibility of the coaching profession. Through your work, coaches gain clarity, confidence, and the practical insight needed to grow into ethical, capable practitioners. As the profession continues to expand globally, so does the need for greater consistency, transparency, and shared standards in mentor coaching practice.

The ICF Mentor Coaching Specialization (MCS) was designed in response to that need. Co-created with mentor coaches, it establishes a clear benchmark for mentor coaching preparation and practice worldwide — recognizing the expertise this work requires and the impact it has on coaches, clients, and the profession as a whole.

What is Mentor Coaching?

Mentor coaching is more than an eligibility requirement for credentialing; it is a cornerstone of a coach's developmental journey. It offers a structured, formative evaluation of coaching skills over time, rather than a one-time summative assessment, providing a more holistic view of the range and breadth of a coach's growth and competence.

ICF defines mentor coaching as a collaborative process where coaches receive feedback based on observed sessions to refine their skills and style in alignment with the ICF Core Competencies. In practice, mentor coaching provides a safe and supportive environment where coaches receive clear, constructive, and actionable feedback on their use of the ICF Core Competencies. This ongoing feedback loop supports coaches' reflection, practice, and progress at a pace appropriate to their learning needs and professional goals, deepening skill mastery session by session.

Why the MCS?

The MCS underscores ICF's commitment to developmental rigor, fairness, and accessibility. By elevating the requirements for mentor coaching practice through this specialization, we are increasing consistency, quality, and integrity in this pivotal area of practice, while creating greater transparency and quality assurance for mentor coaching clients.

By centering mentor coaching on formative appraisal of coaching skill and developmental feedback, grounded in specialized practice, we support coaches in progressing their skills in an environment that is equitable, responsive, accessible and aligned with global standards — ultimately enhancing outcomes for coaches, clients, and the profession as a whole.

Why Now?

Mentor coaching has been a foundational element of a coach's developmental journey and the ICF credentialing process for many years; however, little research on the essential elements of effective mentor coaching practice was available until recently.

The lack of research and accompanying professional standards for mentor coaching resulted in variability in practice quality, candidate experience, and credentialing outcomes.

To address this gap, ICF spent two years focusing on research which led to the introduction of the ICF Mentor Coach Core Competencies in 2024. These competencies outline the foundational tasks, knowledge, and skills that mentor coaches need to effectively serve their clients.

While a strong understanding of the ICF Core Competencies is an essential foundation for mentor coaching practice, research supporting the Mentor Coaching Competencies highlights additional knowledge, skills, and behaviors that are critical for effective mentor coaching.

The MCS builds on these standards to ensure that mentor coach practitioners have critical knowledge and skills to provide quality services and to offer transparency and clarity to coaches seeking a specialized provider.

It is grounded in the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies and validates a mentor coach's training in observing coaching behaviors, integrating insights against credential-level criteria (e.g., BARS/Markers), and co-creating developmental plans with clients.

Specifically, the MCS is designed to:

- Elevate the rigor and consistency of mentor coaching practice globally through standardized training, specializations, and documentation.
- Embed formative evaluation as the primary method for validating coaching skills over time.
- Promote equitable, culturally, and linguistically responsive feedback that improves the fairness of skill evaluation.
- Offer transparency and quality assurance in the selection of a mentor coach to support candidate development and streamline the candidate's experience.

In the 2025 Mentor Coaching Practitioner Survey, mentor coaches cited that one of their biggest challenges to quality mentor coaching services is the **lack of consistent standards for mentor coaching practice.**

And nearly

60%

indicated that **completion of mentor coaching education should be required** to serve as a mentor coach.

What is the Value of the MCS?

As one unified community of mentor coaches, we can replace variability with verifiable excellence, confusion with confidence, and solitary effort with shared stewardship of our profession.

The MCS is designed to recognize the depth of your practice, to provide a clear pathway for continued growth, and to make your expertise and support accessible to those seeking guidance and support along their coaching journey.

- **For your mentor coaching clients:** Your calibrated observation of clients' coaching, high-quality written and verbal feedback, and mastery of credential-level criteria (ACC BARS, PCC Markers, MCC BARS) help coaches demonstrate skills reliably, progress with clarity, and embody the ICF Core Competencies in real practice.
- **For the coaching community:** Your specialization signals a shared standard of excellence, increases fairness and consistency in mentor coaching, and strengthens trust in the pathway from learning to credential. It also helps to create a community of practitioners committed to excellence in mentor coaching practice.
- **For the profession:** Your leadership accelerates a culture of formative development, transparent quality assurance, and ethical practice — so our global community can grow with integrity, fairness, and accessibility.

MCS Requirements and Pathways

The purpose of the MCS is to ensure that mentor coaches are well trained and specialized to:

- Effectively evaluate a coach's skill level at the appropriate credential level (ACC, PCC, MCC).
- Provide meaningful, clear, and constructive feedback that supports continued learning, growth, and development.

You can apply for one, two, or all three specializations, depending on your credential and training.

Standard MCS Path

MCS-ACC Level

Prerequisite Credential: Active PCC or MCC Credential, or a Renewed ACC Credential

Mentor Coach Education: 41 or more hours of education aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies (at least 50% delivered synchronously), including instruction on:

- The ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies.
- Principles for conducting formative appraisal of coaching skills.
- Delivering quality feedback.
- Facilitating client skill development.
- Managing the dynamics of group mentor coaching.
- ACC Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (ACC BARS) Training (ICF or equivalent).
 - **Note:** This training counts as asynchronous education hours.



MCS–PCC Level

Prerequisite Credential: Active PCC or MCC Credential

Mentor Coach Education: 41 or more hours of education aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies (at least 50% delivered synchronously/in real time with a live with an instructor), including instruction on:

- The ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies.
- Principles for conducting formative appraisal of coaching skills.
- Delivering quality feedback.
- Facilitating client skill development.
- Managing the dynamics of group mentor coaching.
- PCC Markers Training (ICF or equivalent).
 - **Note:** This training counts as asynchronous education hours.

MCS–MCC Level

Prerequisite Credential: Active MCC

Mentor Coach Education: 41 hours or more of education aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies (at least 50% delivered synchronously/in real time with a live instructor), including instruction on:

- The ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies.
- Principles for conducting formative appraisal of coaching skills.
- Delivering quality feedback.
- Facilitating client skill development.
- Managing the dynamics of group mentor coaching.
- MCC Behaviorally Anchored Rating Scales (MCC BARS) Training (ICF or equivalent).
 - **Note:** This training counts as asynchronous education hours.

Credit for Prior Learning MCS Path

Long-term mentor coach practitioners can earn the mentor coach specialization through a **Credit for Prior Learning** pathway. Apply through this path by meeting the following requirements:

- Hold an active PCC or MCC credential, or a renewed ACC.
- Complete at least 10 hours of mentor coaching education (synchronous or asynchronous) aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies.
- Complete the current ICF evaluation training courses (ACC BARS, PCC Markers, MCC BARS) or equivalent for each level of specialization you seek to earn.
 - **Note:** ICF evaluation trainings do not count towards your 10 hours of mentor coaching education through this path.
- Provide evidence of five mentor coaching clients who have successfully earned a credential in the past three years.

MCS Renewal Requirements

An ICF Mentor Coach Specialization will be valid for a period of three years, after which it must be renewed. To renew the MCS, the mentor coach must:

- Maintain an active ICF credential.
- Complete 10 hours of continuing education aligned with the ICF Mentor Coaching Competencies within the three years since your MCS was awarded or last renewed.
 - Coaching supervision hours dedicated to your mentor coaching practice can be used to fulfill continuing education credit requirements for MCS renewal.

An MCS holder with specializations at multiple levels (ACC, PCC, MCC) will automatically renew **all** levels of their MCS by meeting the renewal requirements listed above.

MCS Registry

Upon earning and renewing an ICF Mentor Coach Specialization at one or multiple levels, a mentor coach practitioner will automatically receive a digital badge validating their specialization(s) and be listed on the ICF Mentor Coach Registry as a specialized mentor coach at the appropriate level(s).

You may opt out of registry listing, should you desire.

MCS Application Fees

ICF will offer two paths to apply for the MCS, each tailored to the training and experience levels of practitioners.

Standard MCS Path

Apply by meeting the credential prerequisite and 41 or more total hours of mentor coaching education meeting the requirements located in the MCS Requirements and Pathways section of this document.

Standard MCS Path Application Fee – Introductory Pricing (through March 2027):

ICF Member Price: \$50 USD

Non-Member Price: \$125 USD

Standard MCS Path Application Fee – Standard Pricing (Beginning April 2027):

ICF Member Price: \$125 USD

Non-Member Price: \$200 USD

Credit for Prior Learning MCS Path

Apply by meeting the credential prerequisite and 10 hours or more of mentor coaching specific education meeting the requirements located in the MCS Requirements and Pathways section of this document.

Credit for Prior Learning MCS Path Application Fee – Introductory Pricing (through March 2027):

ICF Member Price: \$50 USD

Non-Member Price: \$125 USD

Credit for Prior Learning MCS Path Application Fee – Standard Pricing (Beginning April 2027)

ICF Member Price: \$125 USD

Non-Member Price: \$200 USD

MCS Renewal

To renew the MCS every three years, submit the MCS renewal application demonstrating completion of 10 hours of continuing mentor coaching education, which may include receipt of coaching supervision.

MCS Renewal Application Fee:

ICF Member Price: \$100 USD

Non-Member Price: \$200 USD

Conclusion

The place is here, and the time is now. This is the moment to step up as a standard-bearer — to embody the clarity, care, and rigor that coaches have asked for and that you have long championed.

The ICF MCS recognizes the depth of your practice, supports your continued growth, and affirms mentor coaching as a vital force in shaping the future of coaching.

