



PHASE 3 — PRACTICUM

Week 25 of 36

Launching Into the Field

Sessions 73–75

Tuesday • Wednesday • Thursday

FORGE — Facilitating Opportunities for Reentry, Growth & Empowerment

Dooly State Prison

FORGE Curriculum

Phase 3: Practicum — "Lead and Serve"

Week 25: Launching Into the Field

Week 25 Overview

Purpose: This is it. After 24 weeks of preparation — the self-work, the skill-building, the simulations, the assessments — participants step into the role they've been training for. This week they meet their mentees for the first time, co-facilitate their first real session, and begin learning the hardest lesson of all: that real people are messier and more unpredictable than any simulation.

Sessions This Week: - Session 73 (Tuesday): Supervision — Preparing for First Mentee Meetings - Session 74 (Wednesday): Field Work — First Co-Facilitation Session - Session 75 (Thursday): Field Work — First Mentee Meetings (1-on-1)

Materials Needed: - Mentoring Agreement forms (2 per participant — 1 for mentor, 1 for mentee) - Mentoring Log templates (1 per participant — they'll use this throughout Phase 3) - Pre-Session Preparation Checklist (1 per participant) - Field Work Reflection forms (1 per participant per field session) - Journals/notebooks - Talking piece for circle

Important Phase 3 Note: The weekly schedule has changed. Tuesday is the only structured lesson plan. Wednesday and Thursday are field work days — participants are out in their assigned areas, doing real mentoring and facilitation. The Tuesday supervision session is where they bring what happened, process it, get coached, and prepare for the next week.

SESSION 73: Preparing for First Mentee Meetings

Day: Tuesday **Duration:** 2 hours **Facilitator(s):** Program Lead + Senior Mentor(s)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will be able to: 1. Describe the three goals of a first mentee meeting (connection, clarity, commitment) 2. Use the Mentoring Agreement to structure the first meeting 3. Identify at least five trust-building actions for the first meeting 4. Name the most common mistakes new mentors make in their first meetings 5. Demonstrate a calming technique for managing their own nervousness

Session Plan

Opening Circle (15 minutes)

Set up: Chairs in circle. This is the first Phase 3 supervision session — the energy in the room will be different. Some participants will be excited. Others will be terrified. Most will be both.

Facilitator:

"Welcome to Phase 3. Let me say that again so it sinks in: you made it to Phase 3.

Twenty-four weeks ago, you walked into a circle and I asked you to tell me why you were here. Some of you barely spoke. Some of you were skeptical. A few of you were ready to walk out in the first week.

Now you're sitting here as practitioners. Not participants — practitioners. This week, you'll meet the men you've been assigned to mentor. You'll co-facilitate your first real session. You'll do the work you've been training for.

*But before we get into preparation, I want to check in. Talking piece. One question: **How are you feeling right now about what starts this week? Be honest.**"*

Send the talking piece around. Facilitator goes first and models honesty about the weight of this moment. Listen for anxiety, overconfidence, and everything in between.

Facilitator (after the round):

"If you're nervous — good. That means you care. If you're confident — also good. But stay humble, because your mentee doesn't know about your simulations or your portfolio. He's going to judge you by one thing: whether you're real."

The First Meeting: What It Is and Isn't (15 minutes)

Purpose: Set realistic expectations for what the first mentee meeting should accomplish — and what it shouldn't try to do.

Facilitator:

"Your first meeting with your mentee has three goals. Just three. Not twelve. Not 'fix their life.' Three.

One: Connection. *Your mentee needs to leave the first meeting thinking, 'That guy is somebody I might be able to trust.' Not 'I trust him completely.' Not 'He's my best friend.' Just: 'Maybe this is worth my time.' That's a win.*

Two: Clarity. *Your mentee needs to understand what mentoring is and what it isn't. What you'll do together. How often you'll meet. What's expected of him. What he can expect from you. No surprises.*

Three: Commitment. *By the end of the first meeting, you'll complete a Mentoring Agreement together. This isn't a contract — it's a shared understanding. It says: 'Here's what we're doing, here's how we'll do it, here's what we both commit to.'*

That's it. Connection. Clarity. Commitment. If you hit all three, your first meeting was a success."

Pause.

"Now let me tell you what the first meeting is NOT.

It's not therapy. You don't need to dig into their trauma. You don't need to 'get to the root of their issues.' Not yet. That comes later — if it comes at all. Remember: you're a mentor, not a counselor.

It's not a lecture. You don't walk in and tell them all about FORGE and how it changed your life and how it's going to change theirs. That's your ego talking. The first meeting is about listening, not talking.

It's not an evaluation. You're not there to assess whether they're 'good enough' for the program. You're there to meet a human being and begin building something."

Structuring the First Meeting (20 minutes)

Purpose: Walk participants through a concrete plan for how the first meeting should flow.

Facilitator:

"Let's walk through the first meeting step by step. I'm going to give you a structure. You don't have to follow it word-for-word — you'll develop your own style — but for your very first meeting, having a structure will keep you grounded when your nerves kick in."

First Meeting Structure (write on board or distribute):

Step 1: The Introduction (5 minutes)

"Introduce yourself. Not your resume — your humanity. Something like: 'My name is _____. I've been through the FORGE program, and I've been assigned as your mentor. That means we're going to meet regularly, and my job is to support you — not tell you what to do, not judge you, but support you. Before we get into anything, I want to hear from you. What do you know about this, and what questions do you have?"

Notice what that does: it introduces you, sets the tone, and immediately gives them the floor. You're not performing. You're inviting."

Step 2: Get to Know Them (10-15 minutes)

"Ask questions. Listen. This is where your MI skills come in — open questions, reflections, affirmations. Some good first-meeting questions:

- *'How long have you been here?'*
- *'What's been the hardest part?'*
- *'What are you hoping to get out of having a mentor?'*
- *'What's something you're good at that most people don't know about?'*
- *'Is there anything you want me to know about you right up front?'*

You don't need to ask all of these. Follow the conversation. The goal is for them to feel heard."

Step 3: Set Expectations (10 minutes)

"This is the clarity piece. Cover:

- *How often you'll meet (weekly, on Thursdays — or whatever your schedule is)*
- *How long meetings will be (45-60 minutes typical)*
- *What mentoring looks like: conversations, goal-setting, problem-solving, support*
- *What mentoring is NOT: therapy, favors, special access, fixing everything*
- *Confidentiality: what stays between you, and the limits (safety concerns get referred)*
- *Your role: you're not their boss, not their CO, not their parent. You're someone who's been through the work and is here to walk alongside them."*

Step 4: The Mentoring Agreement (10 minutes)

"Complete the Mentoring Agreement together. Read through each section. Ask if they have questions. Both of you sign. This isn't bureaucracy — it's a handshake in writing. It says: 'We both know what we're doing here, and we both agree to show up for it.'"

Step 5: Close with a Question (5 minutes)

"End with something human. 'What's one thing you'd like to be different about your situation in 3 months?' Or: 'Is there anything you wish your mentor would have told you before you came to prison?' Leave them with the sense that this relationship is about them, not about you."

Trust-Building: What Works and What Doesn't (15 minutes)

Purpose: Practical advice on building trust with someone who has no reason to trust you.

Facilitator:

"Your mentee doesn't trust you yet. Let me say that again: your mentee does not trust you. And he shouldn't. Trust is earned, not assumed. You taught this in Phase 1. Now you have to live it.

Here's what builds trust in a first meeting:"

Trust builders (discuss each briefly):

*"1. **Show up on time.** Nothing says 'you don't matter' like being late to your first meeting.*

- 1. **Remember their name.** Use it. More than once. People hear their own name and something in them relaxes.*
- 2. **Listen more than you talk.** Aim for a 70/30 split — they talk 70% of the time. If you're talking more than that in a first meeting, you're making it about you.*
- 3. **Don't fake it.** If you don't know the answer to something, say 'I don't know, but I'll find out.' If you're nervous, it's okay to say 'I'm going to be honest — this is my first time doing this, and I'm a little nervous.' That's not weakness. That's authenticity.*
- 4. **Don't promise what you can't deliver.** Nothing destroys trust faster than a broken promise. If you say you'll do something, do it. If you're not sure you can, don't say it.*
- 5. **Match their energy.** If they're quiet, don't overwhelm them with enthusiasm. If they're guarded, don't try to force openness. Meet them where they are.*
- 6. **Respect their space.** Don't sit too close. Don't touch them. Don't act like you're old friends. You're not. Yet."*

What destroys trust:

"And here's what will kill trust before it starts:

- Talking about yourself too much*
- Name-dropping FORGE concepts like you're reading from a textbook*
- Trying too hard to be liked*
- Acting like an authority figure*
- Being distracted or looking around while they're talking*
- Making assumptions about their life or their crime*
- Comparing them to yourself: 'When I was where you are...' — save that for later"*

When You're Nervous: Managing Yourself (10 minutes)

Purpose: Normalize the anxiety and give practical tools.

Facilitator:

"Let's talk about something nobody in a prison wants to admit: being nervous.

Every single new mentor I've ever worked with was nervous before their first mentee meeting. Every one. The ones who say they weren't are lying or they don't care enough. Nervousness means you understand the weight of what you're doing.

But nervous energy leaks. If you're wound up, your mentee will feel it. So you need a plan for managing it."

Techniques:

"Before the meeting:

- Use 4-4-4 breathing. You learned this in Week 3. Four seconds in, four hold, four out. Do it for 2 minutes before you walk in.*
- Review your Pre-Session Preparation Checklist. When you've prepared, you feel more in control.*
- Say out loud — to yourself or to a cohort member — 'I have the skills for this. I've practiced this. I'm ready.'*

During the meeting:

- If you lose your train of thought, pause. Take a breath. Say, 'Give me a second.' That's human, not weak.*
- If you don't know what to say, ask a question. Questions always buy you time and put the focus on them.*
- Sit with your hands relaxed. Open posture. Slow your speech down. Your body can calm your mind."*

Role-Play: First Meeting Practice (25 minutes)

Purpose: Practice the first meeting structure before they do it for real.

Facilitator:

"We're going to practice this right now. Pair up. One of you is the mentor, one is the mentee. Mentee — I want you to be realistic. Not hostile, but not easy. Be the guy who's cautious, who's not sure about this, who's been through enough programs to be skeptical.

Mentor — use the structure we just walked through. Introduction, get to know them, set expectations, start the Mentoring Agreement, close with a question. You've got 10 minutes."

Round 1 (10 min): Pairs practice. Facilitator circulates, listens, makes notes.

Pause and debrief (3 min):

"Mentors — what was harder than you expected? Mentees — what did your mentor do that made you feel heard? What made you shut down?"

Allow 3-4 responses.

Round 2 (10 min): Switch roles.

Final debrief (2 min):

"Thursday, you'll do this for real. It won't go exactly like the practice — it never does. But you have a structure, you have skills, and you have each other. Wednesday morning, we'll check in briefly before your first co-facilitation. But right now — how are you feeling?"

Closing Circle (10 minutes)

Facilitator:

"Before we close — a few logistics. Everyone should have received your assignment sheet with your mentee names, their dorm, and meeting times. If you haven't, see me after this session. You should also have your Mentoring Agreement forms, your Mentoring Log template, and your Pre-Session Preparation Checklist. We'll go over the log and checklist in detail, but take time tonight to read through them.

*Closing round. Talking piece: **One thing you're going to do tonight to prepare for this week.**"*

Send the talking piece.

Facilitator (closing):

"Twenty-four weeks led to this. You've done the work. You've earned this. Now go do it.

Wednesday — co-facilitation. Show up early. Prepared. Ready. Thursday — first mentee meetings.

Service Over Self. See you in the field."

Session 73 Checklist

- [] Room set up in circle
- [] Opening circle completed — emotional check-in on readiness
- [] Three goals of first meeting explained (connection, clarity, commitment)

- First meeting structure walked through (5 steps)
- Trust-building and trust-destroying behaviors discussed
- Nervousness normalized — calming techniques reviewed
- Role-play completed (both rounds, with debrief)
- Assignment sheets distributed and confirmed
- Mentoring Agreement forms distributed
- Mentoring Log templates distributed
- Pre-Session Preparation Checklists distributed
- Closing circle completed
- Participants reminded of Wednesday and Thursday field schedule



SESSION 74: Field Work — First Co-Facilitation

Session

Day: Wednesday **Duration:** 2 hours (session) + preparation and debrief time **Structure:** Each participant co-facilitates a session in their assigned area with an experienced FORGE mentor observing

Field Work Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will have: 1. Co-facilitated a real session with a live group 2. Practiced managing real group dynamics (not simulated ones) 3. Received feedback from an experienced observer 4. Reflected on the difference between practice and reality

Pre-Session Preparation Checklist

Complete before arriving at your assigned area:

- Reviewed the session plan with your co-facilitator (at least 30 minutes before)
 - Clarified roles: Who leads which sections? Who handles disruptions?
 - Materials prepared (handouts, talking piece, whatever is needed)
 - Room setup plan discussed (circle, desks, standing — whatever the session calls for)
 - 4-4-4 breathing completed (2 minutes minimum)
 - Reminded yourself: "I don't need to be perfect. I need to be present."
 - Checked in with your observer: Do they have the observation form? Where will they sit?
 - Identified your "grounding word" — one word you can say to yourself if you start spiraling (e.g., "steady," "breathe," "listen")
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During the Session

Your observer will be watching for: - How you open the session (confidence, warmth, clarity) - How you handle transitions between activities - How you respond to unexpected moments (someone checking out, a challenge, a

disruption) - How you share the space with your co-facilitator (collaboration, not competition) - How you close (did participants leave knowing what to do next?)

Remember: - Speak slowly. New facilitators always rush. - Make eye contact with the group, not just your co-facilitator. - If something goes off-script, follow the energy of the room, not the lesson plan. - If you freeze, your co-facilitator is there. That's the whole point of co-facilitation. - You will make mistakes. Every experienced facilitator did. What matters is how you recover.

Post-Session Debrief (with observer)

Immediately after the session, sit down with your observer for 15-20 minutes.

Observer gives feedback using the SBI model: - **Situation:** "When the group first sat down..." - **Behavior:** "You made eye contact with each person and used their name..." - **Impact:** "The room visibly relaxed."

Participant reflects: 1. What went well? (Be specific — not "it was good," but "I handled the disruption at minute 30 without losing the room.") 2. What was harder than expected? 3. What would you do differently next time? 4. What did you learn about yourself as a facilitator?

Field Work Reflection Prompts

Complete in your journal after the session (before Thursday):

1. Describe the moment you felt most confident during the session. What was happening? Why did it feel right?
 2. Describe the moment you felt most uncertain. What triggered it? How did you respond?
 3. What surprised you about facilitating a real group compared to the simulations?
 4. What is one specific thing you want to improve for next Wednesday?
 5. Rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 for today's session. What would it take to move up one number?
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SESSION 75: Field Work — First Mentee Meetings (1-on-1)

Day: Thursday **Duration:** 45-60 minutes per mentee **Structure:** Participants meet individually with each assigned mentee for the first time

Field Work Objectives

By the end of this session, participants will have: 1. Met each assigned mentee face-to-face 2. Completed a Mentoring Agreement with each mentee 3. Begun building the mentoring relationship through listening and trust-building 4. Logged their first entry in the Mentoring Log

Pre-Session Preparation Checklist

Complete before your first meeting:

- Reviewed mentee's basic information (name, dorm, time served, any notes from referral)
 - Mentoring Agreement forms ready (one per mentee)
 - Mentoring Log template ready
 - Reviewed the first meeting structure from Session 73
 - Identified 3-4 open-ended questions to ask
 - 4-4-4 breathing completed
 - Reminded yourself of the three goals: Connection, Clarity, Commitment
 - Checked meeting location — is it reasonably private? Quiet enough to talk?
 - Brought your journal (for notes immediately after)
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During the Meeting

Remember the structure: 1. Introduction (5 min) — who you are, what this is, give them the floor 2. Get to know them (10-15 min) — open questions, listen, reflect 3. Set expectations (10 min) — what mentoring is and isn't,

schedule, confidentiality 4. Mentoring Agreement (10 min) — review together, both sign 5. Close with a question (5 min) — leave them with something to think about

If the mentee is resistant or quiet: - Don't panic. Silence is not failure. - Lower expectations. If all you accomplish is a respectful introduction and they agree to meet again, that's enough. - Say: "I know you didn't ask for this. I'm not here to push anything on you. I just want to meet you and see if this is something that could be useful for you." - Don't take it personally. Their resistance is almost never about you.

If the mentee is overly eager: - Good — but stay boundaried. Don't let the first meeting run two hours because they want to tell you everything. - Gently redirect: "I want to hear all of this — and we'll have time. For today, let's focus on getting set up so we have a strong foundation."

If you have multiple mentees: - Take a 10-15 minute break between meetings. Use it to breathe, jot notes, and reset. Each mentee deserves your full presence — not the emotional residue from the last meeting.

Mentoring Log Template

Use this log for every mentee meeting throughout Phase 3. Fill it out immediately after each session — not at the end of the day, not the next morning. Your memory fades fast.

FORGE Mentoring Log

Mentor Name: _____

Mentee Name: _____

Date: ___ Session #: _____

Duration: _ minutes

Location: _____

What was the focus of today's meeting? (Brief summary — 2-3 sentences)

What did the mentee share or express? (Key themes, concerns, emotions — not a transcript)

What skills/techniques did you use? (Active listening, MI, conflict resolution, boundary-setting, etc.)

What went well?

What was challenging?

Are there any concerns? (Safety issues, mental health, boundary problems, disengagement — flag anything that needs to be brought to supervision)

- No concerns
- Concern to discuss in supervision: _____

Plan for next meeting: (What will you follow up on? What's the focus?)

Mentor's self-reflection (1-2 sentences): How did I show up today? What do I want to do differently next time?

Bring completed logs to Tuesday supervision. They are reviewed weekly.

Post-Meeting Reflection Prompts

Complete in your journal after all mentee meetings are done:

1. **What was your first impression of each mentee? What surprised you?**
2. **Did the first meeting go the way you planned? What deviated from your plan, and how did you handle it?**
3. **What was the hardest moment? How did you respond — and how do you wish you had responded?**
4. **How did it feel to be on the other side — to be the mentor instead of the participant?**
5. **What do you need from Tuesday's supervision session? What question do you want answered?**

FACILITATOR NOTES FOR WEEK 25

What to Watch For

Anxiety levels: Some participants will be so nervous they can barely function. Others will overcompensate with bravado. During Session 73, watch for who's shutting down and who's performing confidence they don't feel. Both need individual attention — a quiet word after the session: "You're going to be fine. Here's why I believe that."

Over-preparation vs. under-preparation: Some participants will try to script every word of their first meeting. Others will wing it because planning feels "fake." Push both toward the middle: "Have a structure, not a script. Know your steps, but be ready to follow the person."

First-meeting reports (Thursday evening/Friday): Check in with participants after their Thursday meetings if possible. The first mentee meeting is a high-emotion event. Some will feel great. Some will feel like they failed. Normalize both. "The fact that you showed up and tried is more than most people ever do."

Common Week 25 Challenges

"My mentee didn't talk." Normal. Some people need 2-3 meetings before they open up. Tell the participant: "You planted a seed. It didn't bloom in 45 minutes. That doesn't mean it's dead."

"My mentee talked too much and I couldn't get to the Mentoring Agreement." Also normal. Prioritize connection over paperwork. You can finish the agreement next week. The fact that the mentee felt comfortable enough to talk is a better sign than a signed form.

"I froze during co-facilitation." Expected for many. Debrief it gently. Ask what was happening internally. Remind them that freezing is a stress response — and they have tools for it. Next week will be better because they know what it feels like now.

"This is harder than the simulations." Yes. It is. Because real people don't follow scripts. Validate that insight — it's an important one. "The simulations gave you the skills. The field gives you the wisdom. You're in the wisdom phase now."

Co-Facilitation Observer Guidelines

The experienced mentor or facilitator observing the Wednesday co-facilitation should: - Sit where they can see the practitioner but not be the focal point of the room - Take notes on the observation form during the session - Not intervene unless there is a safety concern — let the practitioner struggle and recover - Give feedback using SBI immediately after (not the next day) - Lead with strengths before areas for growth - Be specific, not general ("You handled Marcus's challenge well by reflecting his feeling before responding" — not "Good job")

Preparation for Week 26

- Review each participant's mentoring logs from Thursday
- Note common themes and challenges to address in Session 76
- Prepare case presentation format for Week 26's supervision session
- Identify any participants who need additional support or a one-on-one check-in before Tuesday
- If any mentee matching issues arose (wrong fit, safety concerns), address them before Week 26