

# SHEWT Mentorship Program

## Evaluation Summary



Safety and Health Empowerment for Women in Trades (SHEWT) was a multi-phase study, conducted by the University of Washington Department of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences in collaboration with community groups serving tradeswomen in Washington State. SHEWT examined the effects of working in the construction industry on the health and safety of women, and piloted a mentoring program for women apprentices.

Women apprentices in the construction industry face many health and safety risks from dangerous worksites, a hostile work culture, and having to constantly prove their worth. Mentorship is a promising strategy to increase retention and improve safety outcomes for women starting out in the industry. **The SHEWT pilot mentorship program aimed to help women apprentices develop self-confidence and problem solving skills to cope when on-the-job stressors push them to work unsafely, accept bad behavior from others as “just the way it is,” or contemplate quitting.**

*“I like that the program is centered around bringing inherent issues that have been part of the construction culture into the spotlight.”* - Pipe Trades Mentor

### Mentorship Program Structure



**15 mentors** (10 journeywomen and 5 journeymen from the carpenters, electricians/lineworkers, ironworkers, laborers, and pipe trades) were recruited and trained.

Mentors received a day-long in-person training to help them understand how gender expectations at work create unsafe and isolating environments for women workers. They also practiced different mentoring styles, building trust, active listening and communication skills, and learned to help mentees develop proactive problem-solving and leadership skills.

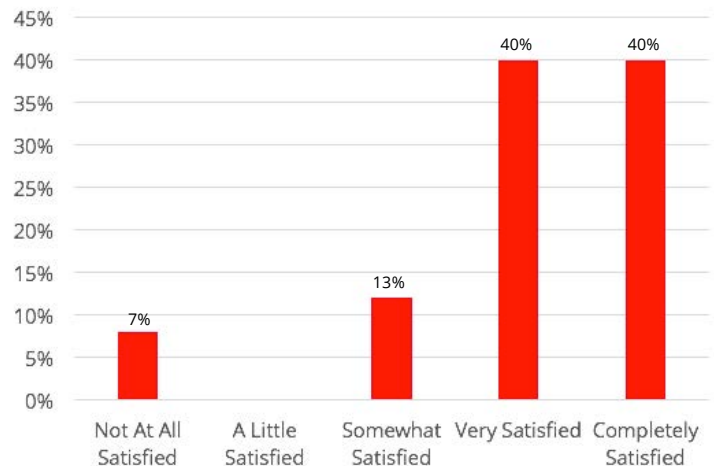


**24 mentees** (women apprentices from the same trades) were recruited and voluntarily matched with mentors. 5 mentees dropped out of the program or were not responsive to their mentors.



Pairs communicated regularly over **6 months** in person or by phone and text message. Communication frequency varied with a range of less than monthly to many times per week.

### Mentee Satisfaction with Mentor Support



*“My mentor was very easy to talk to and was very caring, which made it easy to open up to him about any problems that I may have been having.”* - Carpenter Mentee

*"It is important to let other women know that they are not alone on any jobsite. I want to be an ally and a resource for apprentices."* - Laborer Mentor

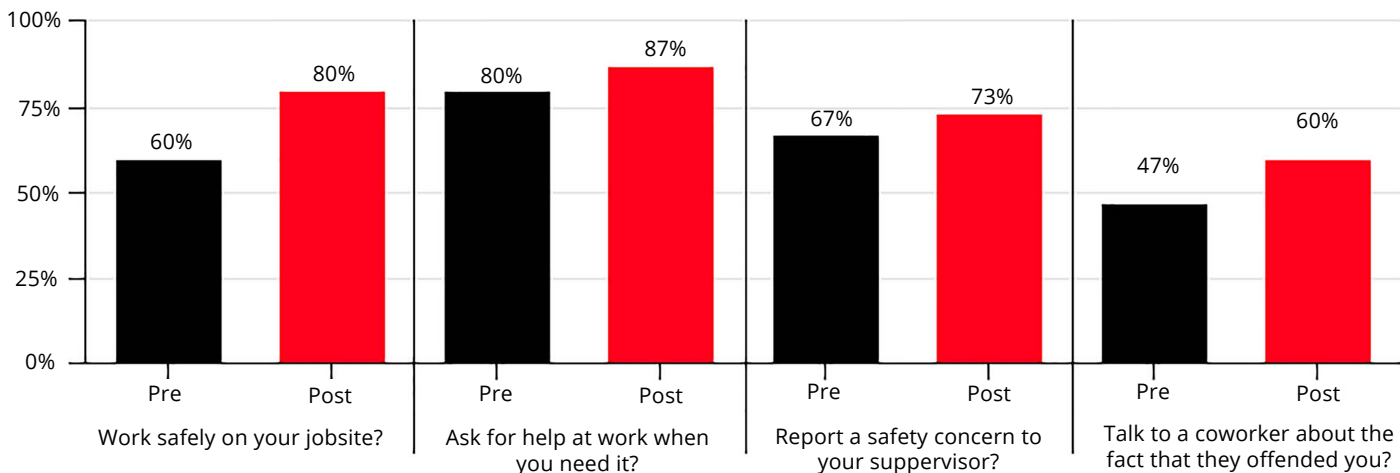
## Key Program Findings

- 93% of mentors reported being either "very" or "completely satisfied" with program support.
- Mentors provided emotional support by checking in with their apprentices and listening to their concerns about work, praising them when they were doing well, and encouraging them when they felt overwhelmed.
- Mentors offered informational support through explanation of how the construction industry operates and tips on how to work safely.
- With encouragement from their mentors, several apprentices successfully advocated for more skilled work assignments or raised harassment concerns to their supervisors.
- While several mentors and mentees did not communicate regularly enough to establish a close bond, or felt uncomfortable opening up about their challenges, others connected well and felt supported.
- Pre-post program surveys reveal improved mentee confidence in asking for help and reporting safety concerns.

## What We Learned

- Six-months is not enough time to develop trust between mentors and mentees and to measure outcomes.
  - **Recommendation** - Evaluate a longer mentoring program using the same model.
- Mentees also need training on how to ask for and receive support.
  - **Recommendation** - Train both mentors and mentees in this area.
- Focusing on negative aspects of work makes mentors feel like they are looking for problems and prevents mentees from opening up.
  - **Recommendation** - Frame mentorship as "getting ahead" rather than "needing help."
- More program support is needed to cultivate mentor/mentee communication and bonding.
  - **Recommendation** - Provide frequent opportunities for pairs to interact in social settings.
  - **Recommendation** - Mentors and mentees should set goals about relationship expectations.

## Percent of Mentees Who Were "Very" or "Completely" Confident in Their Ability To:



**As confidence is the strongest predictor of behavior change, it is encouraging that mentees reported increased confidence in their safety advocacy behaviors after going through the program**