



BARRISTERS' MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

HANDBOOK



PURPOSE

In the legal field, informal mentorship relationships have been in existence for years. Often these relationships result from older or more experienced attorneys taking a younger attorney “under their wing.” This would often result from partners in firms helping newer or younger associates within their own firm “learn the ropes” or attorneys getting together after court for lunch or informal meetings.

Although these relationships still exist today, they are not as prevalent now as they have been in years past. More and more newer attorneys are being admitted to practice in California, and many are becoming solo practitioners as soon as they graduate and pass the bar, thus, the availability for mentorship is becoming more and more scarce.

The purpose of the Barristers’ Mentorship Program is to match newer attorneys with more experienced attorneys to assist each in building and fostering relationships with colleagues. Both the newer attorney and the more experienced attorney can benefit from this Program.

The newer attorney receives the benefit of establishing a professional relationship with an attorney that has more experience. This newer attorney may not have the opportunity to build that type of a relationship on his or her own due to the nature of his or her practice, location, or lack of knowledge on how to meet other attorneys. An attorney that is a solo practitioner will not generally have the same access to mentors that an associate in a law firm would. However, even those attorneys that are part of a law firm can benefit from developing a relationship from someone who is not their “boss.” Questions that may not be asked for fear of showing lack of experience or intimidation may be able to be addressed by the mentor in the formal mentor relationship.

Mentors can also benefit from the mentor/mentee relationship by developing a relationship with a newer attorney who may provide insight and feedback to an attorney that has been in practice for many years. Often more experienced attorneys tend to gravitate toward colleagues they already know and have known for a while. It can be quite interesting for a more experienced attorney to familiarize himself or herself with how newer attorneys are learning the law and the tools they are using, such as internet research and computer use.

How It Works

The Mentorship Program is intended to run for a period of 6 months. Each January and July mentor pairs will be made from those who have requested to participate in the program.

Mentees will be chosen from those attorneys who are practicing less than 7 years and who practice in Ventura County. Mentor attorneys will be chosen from those attorneys who are in practice for more than 8 years and practice in Ventura County.

Each mentee and mentor will be required to fill out a questionnaire that contains various questions concerning that individuals practice and some personal questions such as that individual’s hobbies. These questions are intended to help the Program administrator determine the mentor/mentee pairs.

The administrator of the program will maintain a database of mentors so that the pairings can be made when requested.

The participants will be required to answer one survey per program period (6 months) at the end of the program. This will provide the administrator with feedback on the program and the changes needed to improve it.

Program Objectives

The main objectives of the program are:

- Address practical concerns and problems in the practice of law.
- Create networking opportunities and skills.
- Introduce mentees to the inner workings of the legal system.
- Help mentees gain visibility and exposure in the legal community.
- Share professional values.

Responsibilities of Mentors

A mentor can be a teacher, coach, sponsor, role model, motivator, friend, tutor, etc. as determined appropriate by the mentor in each circumstance.

A mentor is expected to help a newer attorney learn more about being an attorney, help that attorney meet other attorneys and become more involved in our local community and bar association.

Responsibility of Mentee

A mentee is expected to refrain from taking the mentorship relationship as an opportunity to get legal advice or oversight on his or her legal matters. A mentee is expected to actively participate in the relationship by engaging his or her mentor and providing the mentor with insight on new and novel matters in the law that the mentee may be more aware of. A mentee must be willing to candidly discuss issues and consider any advice given.

This program is not intended to be a job search program. Thus, although job searching skills and networking may become a part of a mentor/mentee's partnership, a mentee is discouraged from using this program as an opportunity to request employment with the mentor or limit the relationship to that purpose. Get to know your mentor: what they do, how they got to where they are today, what advice they can give you for your career and use this experience as an opportunity to learn about the local legal community and the overall practice of law.

Program Flexibility

This program will allow for some shifting when matches of mentor and mentee are not right. If either party feels the relationship is not working, it is best to discuss the concerns with the administrator and if necessary allow the relationship to dissolve and rematch the parties with others.

What To Do In the Mentorship Program?

Tips for developing the mentor relationship:

- Tell a career story. Share the highs and lows of your career path.
- Arrange for mentee to attend bar events, networking events or continuing education events so the mentor can help introduce the mentee to others in the legal community.
- Discuss any articles, books or reading material that may be of interest to both parties.
- Help mentee develop career plans, long term and/or short term.

Tips for Engaging a Mentee

- General description of your job.
- How you spend a typical day.
- How you got started in your job.
- Skills learned from your job.
- What you would change or do differently.
- Interpersonal skills you find most important in your work and why.
- Obstacles and barriers you have overcome to get where you are now.

Tips for Engaging a Mentor

- Ask about his or her professional past.
- Share your successes with your mentor: a case you recently won or a strategy that worked well.
- Interview your mentor about his or her career path: how did they get to where they are today? What tips do they have? What would they do differently?
- Discuss a legal issue you are exploring.
- Discuss the issues of integrating personal life/family life with career objectives.

Program Expectations

Mentors and mentees are expected to meet at least once per month at a place and time of their choosing. Each year, mentors and mentees will be invited to attend the annual Barristers' Wine and Cheese mixer. Each participant is expected to provide the program administrator with feedback about the program.

Additional requirements are that each participant be an active member in good standing of the California State Bar or other state bar and be in practice in Ventura County and a member of the Ventura County Bar Association.

Mentors are attorneys with 7 or more years in practice. Mentees are attorneys with less than 7 years in practice.

Final Words

This program is intended to be an opportunity, for both mentors and mentees to develop a professional relationship on a one-on-one basis with another attorney in the Ventura County area. By allowing each other the freedom to openly discuss and work on professional issues, without feeling intimidated, on a regular basis, the mentor and mentee are well on their way to an enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding experience.

Welcome to the Barristers' Mentorship Program!

Good Luck!