



Mentorship Program Guide

For Mentors & New Attorneys

Special Thanks

The WLI thanks the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism for sharing the use of ideas and materials developed in their Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program. This mentoring program is modeled on the Illinois program and would not have been possible without this trailblazing example.

2012 Washington Leadership Institute Fellows

Alia F. Ahmed
Wong Fleming PC

Sharonda Amamilo
*Thurston County Office of
Assigned Counsel*

Louise Bowman
Microsoft

Mario Cava
Liberty Mutual Group

Dean T. Chuang
Crary, Clark & Domanico, PS

James Curtis
*Pierce County Prosecutor's
Office*

Maria Diana Garcia
Columbia Legal Services

David W. Howenstine
Mills Meyers Swartling

Lauren J. King
Foster Pepper PLLC

Jeffrey Liang
Law Offices of Jeffrey Liang

Kate Vaughn
*U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of
Washington*

Karen Denise Wilson
Skagit County Public Defender

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Goals of the Mentorship Program

Mentorship creates an opportunity for an experienced attorney (the mentor) to provide professional guidance and practical knowledge to a new attorney (the mentee). Mentorship is critical to helping attorneys succeed as they enter the legal practice, both by developing key skills and by fostering healthy relationships and perspective. Although law schools offer the building blocks for legal practice, they cannot fully prepare new attorneys for the daily realities of the legal workplace. New attorneys frequently find themselves subject to substantial demands and feelings of isolation, and these pressures are often amplified for attorneys from diverse and non-traditional backgrounds.

The goal of an effective mentorship program is to improve the competence, professionalism, and health of new attorneys. A dedicated mentor deepens the new attorney's ability and capacity for professional thinking and problem solving; teaches the importance of civility and ethics; and serves as a resource in navigating new and difficult situations. Yet successful mentoring can be hard work. All too often, mentors and mentees begin enthusiastically with the best of intentions, but eventually find themselves adrift with little structure and few specific skills and resources to help build a constructive mentorship relationship.

The simple fact is attorney-to-attorney mentoring programs are far more successful when they are guided by goal oriented and effective strategies. This mentorship program is designed to combine a structured mentorship process, specific strategies, and resources to promote successful mentoring relationships. These tools are set forth in this *Mentoring Program Guide*, the accompanying *Mentoring Plan*, and the *Mentoring Resources* for program participants.

Program Development and Implementation

This mentorship program is designed to support the many excellent mentorship programs facilitated by minority and specialty bar organizations, law schools, law firms, and other organizations throughout Washington. These organizations are already equipped to assist and guide the mentoring process, to match mentors and mentees, and to provide opportunities for networking and education amongst their membership. In recognition of these existing programs, this mentorship program seeks to strengthen mentorship without reinventing the wheel. To that end, we invite bar organizations, law schools, law firms, government agencies, and other interested organizations to use the resources, tools, and suggestions in these materials either to build on existing attorney-to-attorney mentorship programs or to develop new programs.

This *Program Guide* sets forth the suggested program standards and guidelines, and the *Mentoring Plan* provides a template of discussion topics and learning experiences for the mentor and mentee to complete over a one-year mentoring term. The *Program Guide* and the *Mentoring Plan* are structured to aid both organizations that wish to start a new program and organizations that wish to improve specific elements of an existing program.

1. Program Administration

Organizations that decide to sponsor a mentoring program should begin by designating a Program Administrator. The Program Administrator is responsible for collecting new attorney and mentor applications and confirming that both the mentor and mentee satisfy the eligibility requirements. The Program Administrator is also responsible for matching mentors with new attorney mentees, organizing an orientation for mentors and new attorneys, and collecting the mentoring agreements.

In addition, it is recommended that mentoring programs include at least one mid-term progress check to support the mentoring participants and to gain feedback on mentoring program development. Finally, to the extent extenuating circumstances prevent either attorney from completing the program or, if the mentoring relationship is not working, it is the responsibility of the Program Administrator to implement the procedures for reassignment of mentors and mentees that are set forth in the organization's approved mentoring program.

Administration Checklist

- Collect new attorney and mentor applications
- Confirm participant eligibility
- Facilitate the matching of mentors with new attorneys
- Organize program orientation
- Collect mentoring agreement and mentoring plan
- Conduct mid-term progress surveys (optional)
- MCLE Credits: Please refer to MCLE credit section for further details about how to apply for professional education credits for your participation in this program.

2. New Attorney Qualifications

The Mentoring Program contemplates that completion of the mentoring program occurs during the first three years of the mentee's practice in Washington. As a practical matter, this means that in order to complete a year-long program within the first three years of practice, the new attorney must begin the program no later than two years after being admitted to the Washington bar.

A new attorney seeking to participate in a mentoring program and earn the professional responsibility credit should meet the following minimum standards:

- Be admitted to practice in Washington no more than two years prior to the date of beginning the mentorship program;
- Have an active member status (eligible to practice law in the State of Washington); and
- Practice law in Washington or intend to practice law in Washington.

Organizations that sponsor mentorship programs may wish to consider additional eligibility requirements based on their particular demographics and membership or focus.

New attorneys who meet eligibility requirements and choose to participate in the mentoring program should complete and submit the New Attorney Application to the Program Administrator.

3. Mentor Qualifications

The success of any attorney-to-attorney mentoring program depends upon experienced and dedicated attorneys who are willing to commit the time to serve as mentors so that they may personally convey the core values and best practices of the profession to new attorneys. To be effective, attorney mentors should embrace teaching and counseling new attorneys in the development of professional habits and strive to improve the legal profession through their mentorship.

Mentors should possess superior interpersonal skills, an appreciation of the value of diversity in the practice of law, and the ability to facilitate quality discussions about the best practices and highest values of the legal profession.

We recommend that any attorney seeking to serve as a mentor should meet the following minimum standards:

- Have an active member status (eligible to practice law in the State of Washington);
- Be admitted to practice law in Washington for not less than six years; and
- Never have been suspended or disbarred from the practice of law in any state or jurisdiction.

Attorneys meeting eligibility requirements and choosing to participate in a mentoring program must complete and submit a Mentor Application to the Program Administrator.

4. Program Orientation

As part of any attorney-to-attorney mentoring program, the sponsoring organization should present an orientation designed to provide mentors and new attorneys with an overview of the mentoring program, clarify roles and expectations, and discuss how to handle a variety of situations. Participation in an orientation should be mandatory.

The orientation should include an explanation and review of the activities and documentation that must be completed in order to satisfy the mentoring program. In addition, the orientation should address effective communication, problem-solving strategies, and the resources that are available to assist participants in achieving a successful mentoring relationship. While organizations will need to tailor orientation content to the needs of their particular program, there are certain basic aspects of any orientation program that will likely be helpful for all programs. Suggested topics to be addressed in the orientation include:

1. Program goals
2. Mentoring relationship and term
3. Mentoring agreement, mentoring plan & resources
4. MCLE credit process (not guaranteed)

5. Generational communication
6. Problem-solving
7. Benefits and rewards of participation

5. Mentorship Relationship and Term

The mentor may be either internal or external to the new attorney's place of employment. There are decided advantages to both internal and external pairings that should be considered in matching the new attorney with the mentor. Internal mentoring participants are able to discuss many different matters relating to clients because of the shared responsibility of liability and the confidentiality that extends to office employees.

At the start of the mentoring term, the new attorney and mentor shall sign a Mentoring Agreement (Internal Attorney version or External Attorney version), which defines the parameters of the mentoring relationship and limits potential liability. As set forth in the Mentoring Agreement, an attorney-client relationship is not established between the mentor and mentee as a result of participating in the mentoring program.

6. Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities

The first activity that the mentoring pair will participate in together is the orientation. Afterwards, the mentoring relationship should be guided by the *Mentoring Plan*, subject to additions based on any special interests of the mentor and mentee. It is the shared responsibility of the individual new attorney and mentor to complete their *Mentoring Plan* during the mentoring term.

The mentoring that will qualify for professional responsibility MCLE involves the development of a specialized professional relationship within which learning occurs. Frequent interaction between the mentor and new attorney is encouraged. Communication will likely occur through a variety of means (*e.g.*, email, telephone, text message); however, at least eight in-person meetings are required.

In all cases, mentoring activities must satisfy Washington Admission to Practice Rule 11 rules to qualify for MCLE credit on a case by case basis. Separate applications *must* be submitted to the WSBA-MCLE office by the mentor and mentee individually to apply for professional education credits. See the WSBA's instructions for Submitting a Course for Approval and Credit at the following link: <http://wsba.org/Licensing-and-Lawyer-Conduct/MCLE/Members/CLE-Accreditation#submitting>.

At the end of the mentoring term, mentors and new attorneys shall attest to their plan completion and submit the plan completion attestation form to the Program Administrator.

Administration Checklist

- Participate in program orientation
- Sign Mentoring Agreement and provide to Program Administrator
- Develop Mentoring Plan and provide to Program Administrator
- Participate in a minimum of eight face-to-face meetings
- Participate in discussions and activities
- Attest to completion and provide attestation to the Program Administrator
- MCLE Credits: Please refer to MCLE credit section for further details about how to apply for professional education credits for your participation in this program.

7. Mentoring Plan

The separate *Mentoring Plan* serves as a guide for the mentor and mentee so that successful completion of the mentoring program can be achieved. Please review the separate *Mentoring Plan*, which includes several lists of action items grouped by specific areas.

Professional Responsibility MCLE Credit

The mentorship program is designed to be a professional learning experience for the mentee and the mentor alike. With this goal in mind, participants may be eligible to receive MCLE credit upon successful completion of individual sessions of the mentorship program; however, MCLE credit approval is not guaranteed.

All attorneys who complete a session of the mentorship program and wish to receive MCLE credits are required to submit individual applications to the WSBA.

For Example: When the mentors and mentees begin a session of the Mentoring Program they are to submit a Form 1 (sample provided) with supporting documents in accordance with APR 11. Instructions are found at <http://wsba.org/Licensing-and-Lawyer-Conduct/MCLE/Members/CLE-Accreditation#submitting>. To apply for credit, at the conclusion of an individual session, the mentors and mentees are to submit attendance and evaluation materials to the WSBA to apply for professional education credits. Detailed explanations and examples are included in the instructions. The WSBA is the final authority in deciding the approval of professional education credits.

Additionally, although attorneys are encouraged to continue serving as a mentor and to volunteer in successive years, MCLE credit is only available for the sessions completed in the first successfully-completed rotation of a mentorship term.

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