

H. Mentoring\Transition into Law Programs

A cornerstone of several of the commissions' efforts is a mentoring program for new lawyers and, in some states, for law students. These programs help to smooth the transition from law school to legal practice, and allow new lawyers and law students to learn about different practice areas as well as to have a reference for questions they may face in their work.

In addition to assisting various bar associations with implementing their own mentoring programs, the Georgia Commission has overseen a law student mentoring program that provided continued contact between students and lawyers throughout the students' time in law school. The Commission hosted an orientation program for mentors, provided materials for the program, planned events to bring together mentors and students, and served as a resource for questions and suggestions from both mentors and law students.

The Georgia Transition Into Law Practice Program (aka “Mentoring Program or TILPP”), was launched in 2006, after the Supreme Court of Georgia in 2005 authorized the State Bar of Georgia to proceed with a mandatory mentoring program. Under this program, all newly-admitted lawyers for their first year of practice are required to engage in a formal mentoring program that includes a curriculum and mentoring by experienced attorneys. The program is designed to teach the skills, professional values and judgment necessary to practice law in accordance with the highest ideals of the profession. The program consists of three (3) kinds of mentoring arrangements – inside, outside and group. Inside mentoring is where mentees are matched with mentors in law firms, prosecutorial and defense offices. Outside mentoring is where solo practitioner mentors are matched with beginning solo practitioners. Group mentoring includes new lawyers who may be unemployed or who are employed in a non-legal setting. Mentors are experienced lawyers who are approved by the Supreme Court of Georgia. During the mentoring year, mentees attend CLE programs that emphasize lawyering skills, as well as the lawyer’s relationships with clients, other lawyers, the courts and the public. The CLE curriculum provides the foundation for the activities and discussions between the mentor and beginning lawyer, as each pair develops a Mentoring Plan tailored to their circumstances.

The Mentoring Program, approved in June 2008 by the State Bar Board of Governors and Supreme Court of Georgia, is now a permanent mandatory program. Other states have been replicating this program and it has attracted international interest.

In Ohio, the Commission’s Lawyer to Lawyer Mentoring Program matches attorneys newly admitted to the practice of law in Ohio to experienced, ethical, and professional attorneys. The purpose of the program is to elevate the competence, professionalism, and success of Ohio lawyers through positive mentoring relationships. Mentoring creates an opportunity for an experienced lawyer to provide professional guidance and share practical knowledge and skills with a new lawyer during the critical transition from law student to legal practitioner.

A new lawyer and mentor create a mentoring plan together based upon their selection of suggested activities and topics. Each activity and topic is supported by curriculum materials, which include discussion questions, cites to the Ohio Rules of Professional Conduct, and instructive articles.

This program functioned as a pilot program available to new lawyers admitted to the Ohio

bar in 2006. Survey responses received by program participants were overwhelmingly positive, and the Supreme Court approved mentoring as a permanent program for new lawyers, starting with lawyers admitted to the Ohio bar in November 2008.

Participation in this program is voluntary. Participating mentors receive CLE credit and new lawyers receive new lawyer training credit. More information, including the mentoring implementation plan and curriculum materials, may be found at the program's website at <http://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/AttySvcs/mentoring/>. Participant surveys can be obtained from the Secretary to the Commission upon request.

In 2006, the South Carolina Commission on the Profession received approval from the South Carolina Supreme Court to initiate a mandatory Lawyer Mentoring Pilot Program to assist beginning lawyers in their transition from student to professional. The Supreme Court ordered that a segment of those taking a recent bar exam be required to participate in the pilot mentoring program. This program was conducted and both the mentors and mentees submitted critiques of the program. The Supreme Court is now considering a second pilot program and making some changes in the proposed mentoring program base on the experience from the first pilot program.

The North Carolina Commission has developed, with the assistance of the Georgia Commission and its local Bar pilot program, a Voluntary Mentoring Program. The program involves local Bar associations having a one year mentoring relationship between volunteer lawyers and judges and newly licensed attorneys. The formal program is a nine month commitment, with the intention of the mentor-mentee relationship continuing informally.

The Illinois Commission adapted the Georgia and Ohio mentoring resources to produce a Lawyer to Lawyer Mentoring Guide that was used in a pilot program in one of the judicial circuits. Based on feedback from that pilot program, the Commission recommended that the Court allow participants in a structured year long mentoring program earn professional responsibility continuing legal education credits, and the Court adopted that recommendation in the fall of 2010. In 2011, the Commission began rolling out the program statewide. Programs must be pre-approved by the Commission. Mentees must be within the first three years of bar admission and mentors must have been admitted for at least six years. The Commission has prepared and made available a template Mentor Plan with structured worksheets setting forth activities in the five areas of professional responsibility CLE. The voluntary program involves collaboration with law firms, law schools, bar associations and other organizations that act as program administrators, handling the matching of mentors and mentees and other administrative tasks on a decentralized basis. At the successful end of the year, both mentor and mentee are qualified to receive six hours of professional responsibility CLE credit, thus satisfying the professional responsibility requirement for the two-year reporting period.

The Maryland Court of Appeals has adopted a pilot mentoring program for newly admitted Maryland attorneys. The pilot program is administered by the Court through the Executive Director of the Commission on Professionalism. The purpose of the mentoring program is to elevate the competence, professionalism and success of Maryland attorneys through positive mentoring relationships. Mentoring creates an opportunity for an experienced lawyer to provide professional guidance and share practice knowledge and skills with a new admittee during the critical transition from law student to legal practitioner.

The Multnomah Committee's six-month lawyer-to-lawyer mentoring program strives to match mentors and mentees as closely as possible. Some questions included on the mentee questionnaire include: What kind of practice do you work in? What type of law or practice do you have an interest in? What are you looking for in a mentor? Ideally, what would you expect from a mentor? What other personal or professional information can you give us that might help us to find a compatible mentor? Are you willing to fully and actively participate in this program? These questions help the committee to pair lawyers who have the same visions and ideals about what they want to get out of the mentor program, as well as to help match lawyers in similar practice fields. Participants in the Multnomah mentoring program reportedly find it to be both helpful and enjoyable.