



## MENTORING TIPS TOOL BOX

**BASIC MENTORING ROLES** – mentors play different roles, and few mentors play all of these roles simultaneously. As a result, many mentees tend to have more than one mentor. In general, however, mentors play four different kinds of roles:

**Teacher** – these mentors educate mentees on substantive law, how to do various tasks, professionalism, civility, and the like. The teaching can be formal or informal. Sometimes these mentors are more like coaches. They teach the mentees the practical skills of law practice, but, also, motivate them to achieve the highest proficiency in those skills.

**Counselor** – these mentors respond to mentees’ questions and requests for help, and they provide advice when requested on particular matters or issues. Sometimes these mentors simply listen and allow the mentee to find the answer on their own. Sometimes these mentors need to step in, whether requested or not, and provide constructive critiques to help the mentee improve a skill or avoid ethical and professional problems. This mentoring requires a trusting relationship and a “safe” environment.

**Role Model** – these mentors “teach” by doing. They demonstrate in their daily lives and practices how best to practice law and serve the community. The topics for this teaching by doing model include law practice skills as well as how to give back to the society and attain a work/life balance.

**Sponsor or Champion** – these mentors introduce their mentees to the bar, to clients and prospective clients, to the community, and to the mentors’ own networks. These mentors use their own influence and reputation to promote the mentees’ careers in these various circles.

**TIPS FOR MENTORS** – there are some “natural born” mentors, but most experienced lawyers can become effective at mentoring with experience and by considering the following tips:

- 1) Be available for your mentee, and be responsive to his or her needs. Let the mentee control how you can help him or her.
- 2) Be a good listener. Sometimes, the mentee just wants to vet ideas and is not looking for your advice as to what to do.
- 3) Ask how you can best help your mentee. Identify his or her goals and develop a plan for meeting those goals.

- 4) Be clear about what you are willing and able to do for the mentee;
- 5) Take a personal interest in your mentee. Get to know him or her; this will strengthen your relationship.
- 6) Be open and transparent about what you get out of the relationship. Why are you acting as a mentor?
- 7) Be a good role model. Practice what you preach. Remember, the mentee will be watching your conduct in both legal and social settings.
- 8) Encourage your mentee to come to you with issues and proposed solutions and welcome open discussion. Mentees learn more from the dialogue than from a lecture as to what to do.
- 9) Remember that mentoring encompasses not just substantive legal issues, but also best practices generally, work-life balance, professionalism, civility, and all other issues that impact one's professional life.
- 10) Sponsor your mentee, which includes introducing him or her to bar activities, civic and community organizations, other lawyers, clients and prospective clients, and other networks that you may have.
- 11) Be patient with your mentee, and don't be judgmental. Remember that you were once where he or she was.
- 12) Avoid a mentoring relationship that involves your being solely a lecturer. Dialogue is much more productive. When helpful, tell stories about your practice, how you learned from your mentors, and how you apply these lessons-learned to your life. Remember "war stories" that are told for "self-puffing" usually are not very helpful to teach a lesson.
- 13) Do not treat a formal mentoring relationship as a relationship requiring you to check particular boxes. Be flexible. Think outside the "boxes to check." Find other topics and activities. Let the mentee suggest things to do.
- 14) Be a receptive audience. You will learn as much from your mentee as he or she will learn from you.

**TIPS FOR MENTEES** – mentees can become more effective at getting more out of a mentoring relationship by considering the following tips:

- 1) Take an active role in the mentoring relationship. Reach out to your mentor and tell him or her your goals for the relationship.
- 2) Be clear about what you want from your mentor at any given time. Do you want advice right now, a sympathetic ear to listen, or help with problem solving? Don't be afraid to ask for civic type work that you want in different situations;
- 3) When you have an issue to discuss with your mentor, approach him or her not only with the issue but also with what you believe to be an appropriate solution. You will learn more this way.
- 4) Respect your mentor's time.
- 5) Be receptive to constructive criticism and new ideas.
- 6) Take the lead in setting up meetings.
- 7) Treat interactions with your mentor as dialogues. Your mentor wants to hear what you think.
- 8) When your mentor invites you to attend a networking event with him or her, jump at the chance. It is an investment.
- 9) Be a good listener.
- 10) Observe how your mentor acts in professional settings. You can learn as much from watching what your mentor does as you can from what he or she tells you directly.

- 11) Ask questions. Your mentor is happy to explain why he or she acted that way in a particular situation.
- 12) Do not treat a formal mentoring relationship as a relationship requiring you to check particular boxes. If you treat the mentoring relationship as a task or an assignment, it will become nothing more.

**RECOMMENDED STEPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING RELATIONSHIP** -- every mentoring relationship can be improved with thoughtful planning of activities. Some activities to consider, include:

- AT THE INITIAL MEETING it is essential for mentors and mentees to jointly develop a plan for the mentoring relationship. Identify and discuss goals for the mentoring relationship. Suggested sample Mentoring Plans are available at CAMP Website: <http://coloradomentoring.org>;
- AT THE INITIAL MEETING it is, also, essential for mentors and mentees to draft and sign a mentoring agreement, which will help manage the expectations for both. (For example, attorneys not from the same law office will want to layout attorney-client privilege guidelines) Suggested sample Mentoring Plans are available at CAMP Website: <http://coloradomentoring.org>;
- Mentors can tell a career story. Share the highs and the lows of your career path or have the mentee interview the mentor about his or her own career path. What were the barriers to overcome and the pitfalls along the way about learning from failures as well as successes, etc.;
- Mentees can share short-range and long-range career development plans and ask mentors for thoughts and critiques. Identify how the mentor can help with those goals, and ask specifically for help;
- Complete actual pro bono projects or cases together (e.g. discussing actual case strategy and/or the legal implications of a management decision);
- Work together at a legal clinic to provide advice to clinic clients (Veteran's Clinics, LawLine9, etc.);
- Help coach High School Mock Trial teams together;
- Attend bar association meetings or other legal/civic organization activities together;
- Find activities for integrating personal/family life with career objectives.

**THE QUALITIES OF A GOOD MENTOR/SPONSOR/CHAMPION – PROFESSIONALISM IN THE PRACTICE OF LAW BY STRIVING FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE LEGAL PROFESSION** – the qualities for mentors in all mentoring relationships, but especially in those with diversity between the mentor and mentee include:

1. Respect in the Legal Community- Highly respected in the legal community with demonstrated success in establishing professional and inclusive networks and relationships.
2. Engages in Public and Private Advocacy - Makes continual and substantive public and private commitment of time and personal advocacy on behalf of mentee, including complimenting mentee before clients and advocating during internal performance evaluations.
3. Shows Leadership, Knowledge of, and Commitment to Advancing Diversity and Inclusiveness in the Workplace - Demonstrates leadership, knowledge of and commitment to advancing and embedding diversity and inclusiveness in the workplace at all levels.
4. Is Aware of and Sensitive to the Negative Impact of Exclusion, but Helps Mentee to Focus on Goals- Is aware of and sensitive to the challenges of exclusion to the morale and success of the

diverse mentee, but helps mentee focus on what needs to be done to pursue and achieve his or her own goals.

5. Ensures that Mentee Has the Same Access to Projects, Client Contact, Helpful Resources and Supportive Relationships as Other “Non-Diverse” Attorneys - Is purposeful in ensuring that the diverse mentee is given full and equal access to challenging projects in his or her area, client contact, helpful resources and supportive relationships needed to advance.

SuSaNi Nash Harris, Sr. Director for Diversity & Inclusive Excellence, Univ. of Colo. Law School  
Karen Hester, Executive Director, Center for Legal Inclusiveness (CLI)

### **Resources:**

Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program (CAMP) Mentoring Resource Center literature at CAMP website <http://coloradomentoring.org/mentoring-resources/mentoring-literature>.

Fogg MA, Gabriel RL, Parker ML, “The Mentoring Relationship: How to Make it Work and Why it Matters,” 42 *The Colorado Lawyer* 53 (October, 2013) at [http://coloradomentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/10-2013\\_FoggGabrielParker.pdf](http://coloradomentoring.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/10-2013_FoggGabrielParker.pdf).