



PROMOTING JUSTICE SINCE 1877

Alameda County Bar Association Barristers' Mentorship Program

The Barristers' Section of the Alameda County Bar Association ("ACBA") is pleased to launch its brand new Mentorship Program. We created this program to link new attorneys ("mentees") with seasoned attorneys ("mentors") in Alameda County so that mentees may gain support and guidance as they embark on their professional law careers. For mentors, participation in the program is an opportunity to give back and support the profession of law, and help shape its future by coaching the mentees and sharing their experiences and life lessons.

Participation in the Barristers' Mentorship Program (BMP) is voluntary and does not establish an attorney-client relationship. Based on the availability of mentors and mentees, and the responses on the questionnaires completed by both parties, the BMP Committee will match a mentor and mentee together. There is no guarantee that everyone will be placed. The mentor and mentee are responsible for building an effective mentorship relationship together. The mentorship relationship can be terminated by either party at any time, without reason, by informing the BMP Committee.

The Mentorship Relationship

The mentoring relationship is a forum for discussing general issues involved with the practice of law and career in the legal profession. Participants must be careful not to reveal client confidences. Mentors are not expected to give specific legal advice to mentees on their cases and mentees are not expected to work for the mentor on any of their cases.

The relationship should allow the mentee to ask questions of the mentor, in confidence, regarding, for example:

1. General legal questions or general advice;
2. Questions about procedures in certain courts;
3. Ethical issues related to the practice of law;
4. Advice regarding difficult clients;
5. Questions about billing clients and managing a legal practice;
6. General career questions; and
7. Work-life balance.

A mentor should provide the mentee with:

1. Encouragement, support, and affirmation;
2. Opportunities to explore new ideas and alternatives;
3. Networking opportunities; and
4. Other support as warranted by the relationship.

There are no right or wrong questions or answers. The mentorship relationship is simply an opportunity for the mentee to learn from the ideas and experiences of the mentor.

The Mentorship Program is not a recruiting tool nor is it to be used to establish "of counsel" relationships. The Mentorship Program is a source of camaraderie, advice, and general guidance.

For More Information

Please contact Kaysi Holman at kaysi@acbanet.org for more information on the Program.

Barristers' Mentorship Program Requirements

General Requirements:

There are few formal requirements for participation in the BMP; the mentee and mentor relationship should develop as the individual mentors and mentees see fit.

1. Mentors must make at least a six month commitment to participate in the program. They may, however, continue as a mentor beyond those six months.
2. Mentors must meet their mentees at least once in person within the first month after they are matched. The mentor must initiate the first meeting; thereafter, either the mentor or mentee can initiate meetings.
3. Including meeting within the first month, mentors must meet their mentees at least four times within the six month period. Of course, they are free to meet more frequently if they choose.
4. The mentorship relationship can be terminated by either party at any time by informing the BMP Committee; there is no requirement that any reasons be given.
5. Should a mentorship relationship be terminated within the six month period, the mentor and mentee can ask to be reassigned.
6. Once a mentee has participated in the BMP for the full six-month period, he/she becomes ineligible to be matched again. A mentee and mentor may choose to continue the mentorship relationship beyond the six-month period.

For Mentors

Who Can Be A Mentor?

1. A mentor must have at least five years of experience as a practicing attorney.
2. A mentor must be a member in good standing of the ACBA and the State Bar of California.

Guidelines for Mentors

Mentors are expected to provide mentees with advice and guidance on an informal basis. As outlined above, mentors must meet with their mentees at least once *in-person* within the first month of the match to help get the relationship started quickly and help the mentee feel comfortable.

The mentorship relationship is informal and flexible. It should meet both the needs of the mentors and the mentees. While the growth of the relationship relies upon the efforts of both mentors and mentees, the mentor plays a larger role in nurturing the relationship.

Mentoring duties include listening to the mentee's concerns and exchanging ideas. Mentors are supportive but their role is not to answer specific legal questions or perform legal research for the mentee. While there is sharing of experiences and lessons, mentors are reminded that it is unethical to share attorney-client information.

For Mentees

Who Can Be A Mentee?

Any attorney who is an active member of the ACBA and an active member of the State Bar of California in good standing, and a member of the ACBA Barristers Section may be a mentee.

Guidelines For Mentees

The mentorship relationship requires work from both the mentor and the mentee. Mentees must respect their mentors' schedule. Mentees should not use the BMP to seek specific legal advice. Mentees must be mindful to maintain the confidentiality of their clients and they may not ask their mentors to offer professional services to their clients. Additionally, mentees must not use the BMP as a legal recruiting tool.