

MENTORSHIP CURRICULUM GUIDE

*A Workbook
for Mentors
and Mentees*



Mentorship Curriculum Guide

Contents

I.	Introduction	3
II.	Optimizing your Experience	4
III.	How to get started?	6
IV.	Suggestions for Mentees	7
V.	Suggestions for Mentors	12
VI.	Adapting Mentoring to Meet Different Learning Styles	17
VII.	Pre-Mentoring Session Reminders	19

The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) provides this Guide, related materials, links, and resources for informative purposes only—The WSBA does not warrant the information provided with regard to accuracy or any other purpose. No endorsement is intended, nor does the information contained herein constitute legal advice or legal opinions. You are responsible for ensuring your own legal and ethical compliance. Any use of the materials herein is not a defense against discipline, a malpractice claim, or other legal proceeding. This Guide does not modify the rules, statutes, and regulations set by the federal government, state legislature, Washington Supreme Court, or the Bylaws and policies of the WSBA, or confer any additional rights.

Introduction



From casual coffee shop meetings to office discussions over an agreed list of topics, mentoring can happen in a variety of settings, take a variety of forms, and is dependent on the needs of each pairing. WSBA Mentorship programming supports members engaging in helpful and valuable mentoring experiences with innovative mentorship initiatives and by providing mentoring opportunities across the state. As a WSBA member, you can choose the opportunity that is right for you.

This Mentorship Curriculum Guide was created as a supplement to the WSBA Mandatory Continuing Legal Education (MCLE) [Self-Directed Structured Mentoring Program Guide](#) with the goal to enhance mentor-mentee relationships. Each worksheet is designed to enrich conversations around the six categories laid out in the guide. The worksheets are designed around the MCLE guidelines to simplify the process for those who are seeking CLE credit for their mentorship activities. While the worksheets are designed to be a helpful tool for those seeking CLE credit, this curriculum is not required to receive CLE credit.

Optimizing Your Experience



These worksheets follow the six categories laid out in the MCLE Self-Directed Structured Mentoring Program Guide, thus there are worksheets addressing ethics and professional responsibility, improving the legal system, office management, personal development and mental health, professional development, and substantive law topics. To make them more user friendly, each worksheet is structured in the same way. Specifically each worksheet has a:

- Theme or “Big Idea” for the topic.
- Conversation starters to help direct the conversations that a mentor and mentee will have.
- Activities for hands-on learning that allows mentees to better internalize the material.
- Resources to review in preparing for the discussion of the topic or as supplemental material afterward.

List of Worksheets



ETHICS AND PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

1. Ethics Traps and How to Avoid Common Pitfalls
2. Quality Control and the Practice/Business of Law
3. Ethics and Civility
4. Race, Culture, and Civility in the Legal Profession

IMPROVING THE LEGAL SYSTEM

1. Access to Justice
2. Introduction to the Courthouse
3. Oral Advocacy
4. Pro Bono Opportunities
5. Niche and Nontraditional Legal Careers
6. Alternative Dispute Resolution
7. Diversity

OFFICE MANAGEMENT

1. Starting Your Law Office
2. Financial Management for the Law Office
3. Screening and Managing Clients
4. Office Technology and Infrastructure

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MENTAL HEALTH

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health
2. Work-Life Balance

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1. Civility and Etiquette in Your Practice
2. Goal Setting

SUBSTANTIVE LAW

1. Administrative Law
2. Appellate Law
3. Bankruptcy/Consumer Law
4. Civil Rights Law
5. Elder Law
6. Estate Planning, Probates, Trusts
7. Labor/Employment Law
8. Family Law
9. Health Law
10. Real Estate Law

Some ideas to get started?



Take time to clarify why you are forming a mentor-mentee relationship. You might start by sharing answers to questions like:

- Why did you seek out a mentor?
- Why did you choose to mentor?
- What do you think are the benefits/costs to being part of a mentoring relationship?

Activities you could do to get started:

- Jointly create a purpose statement for your mentoring relationship (i.e. we are entering into this mentoring relationship to...).
- Create a list of what each of you must or must not do to make this mentoring experience a success for both of you.
- Develop an agreed upon minimum viable product (MVP). A minimum viable product is a description of the minimum result you must be getting in order to continue the relationship (i.e. quarterly we will revisit whether we think we are getting what we need out of the relationship and renew our commitment to working together if appropriate).
- Review the [Quick Tips for Seeking Mentors and Advisors](#) one-pager on how to adhere to the Rules of Professional Conduct in establishing a mentorship relationship.

Suggestions for Mentees

IV

Establish goals at the outset for what you wish to achieve from the mentoring process.

- Clearly explain your personal goals to your mentor early in the relationship.
- Help your mentor understand your reasons for these goals.
- Reach an understanding with your mentor as to the goals for the mentoring relationship
 - These goals may differ somewhat from your personal goals, but your personal goals should have preeminence.
 - Mentoring should be focused on your success.
- Keep in mind that your mentor may have a different background or culture than you. Explain any background cultural matters or issues that underlie your goals to the extent that you believe a deeper understanding may be helpful to the relationship.
- Always keep your goals (personal and mentoring relationship) in mind and remind your mentor when you seem to be drifting away from them in your discussions.

Listen carefully to what your mentor is telling you.

- Listening is key to succeeding in the practice of law, so use your mentoring sessions as a means of developing this skill.
- Discuss your learning style with your mentor to facilitate learning, paying particular attention to how you best receive suggestions and feedback. (Reference Section VI of Guide)
- If the mentor's advice or the reasoning behind it is not clear, ask questions until you fully understand the advice.
- Try not to be dismayed or hurt by advice given by your mentor.
 - If your mentor is offering critical advice about personal matters, understand that he or she is taking a chance of losing your trust.
 - Ask yourself why the mentor is offering such advice.
 - Appreciate the chance your mentor has taken to share this advice with you. Remember, you will ultimately decide whether the advice has merit.

Suggestions for Mentees

IV

- If the mentor seems somewhat off base in their advice, take the opportunity to ask yourself what there is about the advice that misses the point and dare to discuss the matter further until you reach some acceptable agreement about the matter at issue.
- Remember that your background and culture may differ from that of your mentor, so take the time to explain yourselves to each other so that more effective understanding may begin.
- If you need to take more time to process a suggestion or comment, let your mentor know you are doing so in order that he or she can come back to the matter later.

Be aggressive about chasing your personal goals.

- Mentoring is all about your future success, so you have the primary obligation to remind your mentor of your personal goals when you believe your mentor's advice has strayed from them.
 - If you feel you have strayed off track, explain your reaction to your mentor as clearly as possible. Be open to considering your mentor's reasons for the direction your discussion has taken.
 - Remember that your mentor may be staying true to your goals by seeing an issue that is not clear to you and may be trying to bring it to your attention.
 - If you feel your mentor has made an assumption about you that is incorrect, discuss the matter as soon as possible to clear up any misconceptions.
 - At times, there is great benefit to be found on brief trips down side roads, especially if the diversion is relevant to the topic at hand, even if it is not within the scope of your goals.
- Since mentoring should be focused on you and your goals, you have the final say whether the mentoring relationship is working for you.
- Trust is at the heart of every successful mentoring relationship, so if it doesn't develop for any reason within a reasonable time, ask to be relieved of the relationship.
- Not every senior practitioner is an effective mentor and if you decide your mentor isn't effective for you ask to be relieved of the relationship.

Suggestions for Mentees

IV

- However, don't give up on any mentoring relationship too soon as trust always takes a great deal of time to develop.
- If you had difficulty with more than one mentoring relationship, ask yourself what caused your past unease and select your next mentor with greater care.

Be open to receiving advice and be eager to implement it.

- Generally, mentors give advice for a reason. If you are not clear why a piece of advice is being given, ask questions until you understand.
- Resistance is sometimes a natural reaction to well-intentioned advice, so remember that your mentor is trying to help you succeed.
- If the mentor persists in his or her advice after you resist, try to have as candid a discussion as possible so that each of you can understand why the other is taking your respective positions.
- If you are resisting a mentor's advice even after understanding his or her reasons for giving it, ask yourself why.
 - If there is merit to the mentor's advice, engage in reflection about the source of your resistance.
 - If you feel the mentor's advice is without merit or is due to a misperception about you, your background, or your culture, explain to your mentor what the misperception is in your opinion.
 - Have a discussion about the misperception until you achieve common ground with your mentor.
- Your mentor wants to see you succeed, so take time at a subsequent session to explain to your mentor what steps you have taken to implement advice given at previous sessions.
 - Ask for suggestions for course corrections if the mentor feels you have not implemented his or her advice in the most effective manner or if you have not achieved the results you thought you would.
 - Share the results achieved by taking your mentor's advice.

Suggestions for Mentees

IV

Remember that your mentor is like a coach.

- Your mentor hasn't joined the relationship in order to perform your work; he or she is in the relationship to teach you skills necessary for you to do your work.
- Usually, your mentor will advise you on a course of action without giving you the final answer to a specific question of law.
- Remember that we generally learn best by doing.
- Sometimes a specific answer to an issue is important, so push back if you believe your mentor is trying too hard to avoid giving that answer, and listen carefully to the reasons your mentor gives if he or she continues to withhold the specific advice.
- At times a mentor should give you specific answers to specific questions, so be assertive if you feel you have reached that point and explain clearly why you believe it ought to be given.
- Discuss with your mentor why he or she has decided to become a mentor. You may gain a great deal of insight into your mentor by better understanding their story and motivation.

Confidentiality is a key ingredient to successful mentoring.

- All personal information exchanged between a mentor and a mentee should be kept confidential under normal conditions.
 - There are always exceptions to any rule, but the exceptions to this one should be quite narrow.
 - A successful mentoring relationship is a matter of trust, and trust requires confidentiality.
- If a mentor shares personal information with you to illustrate a point that he or she is trying to make, do not share this information with any third party without the mentor's prior consent.
- Expect your mentor to treat your personal information in the same manner as the previous bullet point.
- This is such an important issue that the principle of confidentiality should be discussed candidly with your mentor at your first meeting.

Suggestions for Mentees

IV

Candor and honesty are necessary in order for you to benefit the most from a mentoring relationship.

- There are times when you might be embarrassed to admit to a lack of knowledge about a matter under discussion, but your mentor will be unable to assist you effectively without understanding your need.
 - Take a chance and explain your lack of understanding.
 - Help the mentor backtrack to a point where his or her advice becomes meaningful and relevant to your situation.
 - Ask your mentor to assist you with overcoming your lack of knowledge.
 - Ask your mentor to tell you what further efforts you ought to make on your own to overcome any gaps in knowledge.
- If you feel you cannot tell your mentor about sensitive personal information, ask yourself why that might be.
 - If it is due to an excess of caution, work yourself up to taking the chance to share.
 - If it is due to a lack of trust, consider ending the mentoring relationship.
 - Consider what impact withholding this information may have on the mentoring relationship.

Remember to thank your mentor or otherwise show appreciation.

- Mentors are giving their time freely for your personal benefit and they want to know that you are appreciative of the effort they are making.
- Appreciation is best expressed in words, not gifts.
- Most successful mentors are repaying their own mentors in kind, by passing along advice that they once received in a similar relationship.
 - If you understand this to be the case, take the time to ask the mentor about his or her own mentor, as doing so will tell you a great deal about your mentor's motivations for entering a relationship with you.
 - Try to understand the fellowship that this chain of mentoring brings to the legal profession.
- The greatest compliment you can give to your mentor is to mentor a younger practitioner at some future time in your career when you have gained the experience and expertise to become an effective mentor.

Suggestions for Mentors



Mentoring is fundamentally about how you can assist your mentee.

- Tell your mentee that he or she will be the sole subject of your meetings.
- Use anecdotal stories to illustrate advice, not to make yourself look good.
- Spend a few minutes getting caught up on personal matters at the start of each meeting, then remind your mentee that the meeting is all about him or her and get down to business.
- Mentoring is about helping others help themselves.
- Discuss with your mentee your reasons for wanting to mentor.
- Consider these reflections on what it means to mentor:
 - Defining mentoring is difficult. Although in a broad sense it is about education, it is easier to begin with what it isn't. In this firm, it is not training to perform a specific legal skill or function. Nor is it something that you pass off to someone else when you are out of town. Rather, it is what we do when we are in town, the rendering of assistance, advice, knowledge, attention, caring and interest by a senior lawyer to a junior lawyer, with the goal of helping the junior lawyer become better:
 - at the practice of law as a process, not merely as a technical skill or trade,
 - in his or her relationship to the Firm's community,
 - in his or her relationship to the business and legal communities and to the community at large,
 - in his or her efforts to attract and hold business, and,
 - at enjoying the privileges and obligations of being a lawyer and holding those things in balance with the junior lawyer's relationships with families, friends and the world at large.
 - In other words, mentoring should be about helping the young associate take his or her place in the world as a first-class lawyer in all respects.

Suggestions for Mentors



- Mentoring meetings work best when held at regular, scheduled intervals.
- Consider a reoccurring appointment on Outlook (i.e., the third Thursday of each month).
- Treat the meetings as an important business meeting and only reschedule when absolutely necessary.
- Give the mentee the obligation to find a new date for a missed meeting if rescheduling is required.
- Your mentee should be advised about your availability between meetings, especially when they have a matter of substance on which they need immediate advice.
 - The greater your availability, the more benefit you will provide.
 - However, you should not become an agony aunt to simply listen to all of your mentee's problems.
 - Learn to be firm about sending a mentee away when they cross the line in the previous bullet point.
 - Encourage your mentee to contact you whenever they have a specific issue with which they need assistance.

You are a mentor, not a rescuer or a substitute hitter.

- It is not up to you to do the mentee's assigned work for him or her, and, in fact, doing so will not serve the mentee well.
- It is up to you to advise the mentee how to do the work or how to improve their work product.
- Mentoring has the most lasting impact when you can focus on teaching the mentee a new skill or a refinement of an existing skill.
- When reviewing actual work product, it is best to offer general suggestions rather than actual wording, and send the mentee off to do the work.
 - If you have time to review his or her edits, you can be more specific as to wording, structure or topic.

Suggestions for Mentors



- Mentees learn best by doing, not by being told.
- The more times you are able to repeat a review of successive drafts, the more your mentee will benefit from your involvement.
- If the mentee is stumped, offer specific language or refer them to a specific resource on the topic at hand.
- If your mentee wishes to discuss a particular issue, ask your mentee to bring forth their best solution to the issue before giving your own advice.
- If you realize that the mentee is about to fail in a way that is damaging, offer help, but also realize that sometimes measured failure is a path to success.
- A mentee's failure is an opportunity to teach, so don't just focus on future work product but review failures with them as a teacher, not as a judge. Use the opportunity as a teaching moment.
- Your primary job is to enhance your mentee's skills and abilities to guide them in their pursuit to become a better practitioner.

Listen carefully to what your mentee is saying.

- Treat the mentee as you would a client.
 - Listen not only to his or her actual words, but listen to understand the reasons behind them.
 - Sometimes the question being asked is not the root of the problem with which the mentee is trying to deal.
 - As a mentor, you need to answer the actual question as well as offer solutions for the underlying concern you believe prompted the question.

Have empathy for the mentee's situation, culture and concerns.

- When you sense an underlying concern but aren't certain you understand what it is, ask questions and delve deeper until you fully understand.
- If it is a cultural issue, engage in conversation as equals to understand what those differences might be and how they might affect your mentee's approach and thinking.
- Do not judge a mentee because of their cultural concerns; try to understand your mentee's worldview and learn about their culture in order to gain new perspectives.

Suggestions for Mentors



- If cultural issues are involved in your discussions, consider your own biases, whether explicit or implicit.
- Mentoring is best done in the context of an issue. A significant part of that context is the mentee's view of it and its importance.
- The mentee will likely teach you as much as you teach them, so treat your mentee as an equal and as a resource.

As you listen to questions which your mentee is asking but which you find confusing, irrelevant, or off-base, ask yourself what might be driving the question.

- Often, something might be going on in the mentee's life that is causing concern and somehow relates, in their mind, to the question being asked.
- Your mentee may need help with the underlying concern more than they need an answer to the question being asked.
- Respect your mentee's privacy.
- Consider that you are one of the people best placed to confront your mentee about hard personal issues and consider taking the chance to do so when it would be of benefit to the mentee.
- Work to gain your mentee's trust. A high degree of trust is necessary to allow candid discussion of private matters.
- Always keep your mentee's private matters confidential. Make mutual confidentiality one of the touchstones of your relationship.
- You may have an obligation to report your mentee's behavior under applicable ethical rules; this decision is up to you, not your mentee.

Learn to be critical in an effective manner.

- Your job as a mentor is to use mistakes as teaching moments to help your mentee understand what they might or should have done differently.
- Be firm if you learn of behavior that is likely to work prospectively to the mentee's detriment.
- Be stern if you learn of prospective unethical behavior, even to the point of terminating the relationship if your mentee seems unable to avoid the behavior in question.

Suggestions for Mentors



You may not possess the requisite knowledge to assist your mentee with every issue.

- Offer access to other resources when you do not possess the requisite skills to assist in a matter.
 - Other resources may be people, organizations, or written resources.
 - If you refer your mentee to an individual, arrange an introduction in order to assist your mentee.
 - Keeping confidentiality in mind, explain to the resource what you believe the issue to be, but ask them to spend time with the mentee in order to be certain that what you believe is correct.
 - Ask for feedback from the mentee after he or she has met with the resource to assure that they got the answer they needed and to help them implement it if they aren't certain how to do so.

If you are working on improvement in a specific area, consider giving meaningful work assignments to be accomplished by the time of your next regularly scheduled meeting.

- Sometimes incremental improvement is required to achieve a goal, and work assignments will move a mentee along the path to the goal.
- Work assignments should be specific to the issue at hand and to the mentee's level of performance.
- Work assignments work best when they can be integrated into the mentee's work schedule or work habits, as opposed to something which might be considered as homework.
- Make certain the work that you assign, or have assigned, to your mentee will advance his or her knowledge or skills; your mentee needs to stretch to learn.

Mentoring is not training, although they may prove to be congruent at times.

- While training is important, it is not the essence of mentoring.
- Remember that your mentee has other means of access to training. Suggest to your mentee the kinds of training that you feel he or she needs to achieve specific goals.

Adapting Mentoring to Meet Different Learning Styles



Individuals typically fall under one of the following three learning styles ([discover how you learn by taking the Vark Questionnaire](#)):

- **Visual Learners:** preference for observed or seen experiences, including pictures, diagrams, handouts, films, flip-charts, etc. These individuals typically use phrases such as “show me,” or “let’s look at that.” Visual learners perform best with a new task when they can first see someone else conduct the task or exercise you are asking them to perform. These individuals typically work well with lists, visual depictions of the task, and written instructions.
 - Tips for Accommodating Visual Learners
 - Use maps, flow charts, or webs to organize materials
 - Create a timeline
 - Use a storyboard
 - Highlight and color code notes and materials
 - Encourage the mentee to make their own flashcards
 - Write out checklists
 - Draw pictures or cartoons
 - Make use of a chalkboard or white board
- **Auditory Learners:** preference for information to be transferred to them by listening to the spoken word of others, sounds, or noises. These individuals typically use phrases such as “let’s talk about that,” or “tell me.” Auditory learners are happy when they are given verbal instructions. They perform their best when listening to instructions from an expert.
 - Tips for Accommodating Auditory Learners
 - Engage the mentee in a conversation about the subject matter
 - Question the mentee about the materials
 - Ask for oral summaries
 - Tape the lecture for the mentee to replay
 - Read material out loud

Adapting Mentoring to Meet Different Learning Styles

VI

- **Kinesthetic or Tactile Learners (Hands-on Learners):** preference for the physical experience of touching, feeling, holding, doing, and practical hands-on experiences. These individuals typically use phrases such as “let me try that.” Kinesthetic or Tactile Learners perform their best when they get the opportunity to try the task first hand, learning as they go. These individuals like to experiment, hands-on, and rarely look for instructions first.
 - Tips for Accommodating Kinesthetic or Tactile (Hands-on) Learners
 - Role play
 - Ask the mentee to envision a scene where they need the material, then require them to act it out
 - Use a game
 - Allow the mentee to job shadow
 - Use mock sessions
 - Utilize some form of body movement (pacing, snapping fingers, etc.) while reciting the material learned

Pre-Mentoring Session Reminders

VII

- Dedicate your undivided attention to the mentoring session
- Keep the mentee's individual learning style in mind
- Adapt your pace to the mentee's needs
- Be empathetic when a mentee struggles with the material
- Seek constant feedback and confirmation from the mentee regarding their understanding of the materials
- Take note of particular areas or topics that will require follow-up
- Provide frank feedback in a constructive manner

Thank You!

Thank you to the volunteer Curriculum Development Team whose talent, time and experience helped shape these worksheets:

Ahseon Park	Elizabeth Lee	Mubarak Abdur Raheem
Ailey Kato	Gloria Ochoa-Bruck	Nancy Elliott
Amie Peters	Harry McCarthy	Natasha Qu
Amy Kim	Joshua Haubensstock	Priya Cloutier
Anessa Novasio	JP Diener	R. July Simpson
Ann Vetter-Hansen	Julie Schaffer	Sara Shapland
Appalenia Udell	Kate Jones	Shontrana Gates-Wertman
Brendon Taga	Katharine Edwards	Steve Ellis
Brittany Dietz	Kathleen Kline	Theodore Hong
Bryce McPartland	Laura Bradley	Tim Jaasko-Fisher
Catherine Hoover	Mara Snyder	Tom Hoolihan
Constance Locklear	Margo Ahn	Videlinata Krishna
Cynthia Sullivan-Brown	Mike Garner	
Diane Dick	Morgan Edrington	

Thank you to WSBA staff who worked on this project as subject matter consultants:

Dana Barnett (Diversity and Inclusion Specialist)	Diana Singleton (Access to Justice Board Manager)	William Chemnick (Education Programs Lead)
Dan Crystal (Program Manager, Member Wellness Program)	Jeanne-Marie Clavere (Professional Responsibility Counsel)	

