

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS
DALLAS BAR ASSOCIATION TRANSITION TO LAW PRACTICE PROGRAM

1. What is the goal of the Program?

The goal is to provide professional guidance to beginning lawyers who are newly admitted to the practice of law. This will be accomplished by matching beginning lawyers with experienced “guide”/mentors. The “guide”/mentors and beginning lawyers will participate in six CLE seminars that focus on practical skills and ethical values and professionalism and meet six additional times to discuss those matters addressed during the seminars.

2. How are “guides”/mentors selected?

They “guide”/mentor will be screened by the Program Committee, which will recommend mentors for appointment. Mentors must agree in writing to serve as a mentor. Mentors must meet the following minimum qualifications:

1. Be an active member of the State Bar of Texas, in good standing;
2. Be admitted to practice for not less than five (5) years;
3. Have a reputation among judges and peers in the local legal community for competence and ethical and professional conduct; and
4. No sanctions, suspensions or disbarments in any state from the practice of law.

3. Is a beginning lawyer allowed to choose his or her “guide”/mentor?

The assignment of mentors within a firm, office or practice group will be based on the recommendation of the firm or other employer, subject to the stated qualifications for appointment as a mentor and compliance with the other requirements of the Program.

If a beginning lawyer does not practice with an eligible “guide”/mentor, he or she will be asked to nominate his or her own mentor. The nomination must be approved by the committee. The committee will match a beginning lawyer with a “guide”/mentor if he or she is unable to nominate an eligible “guide”/mentor.

4. How are a “guide”/mentor and a beginning lawyer in the same firm matched?

The assignment of a mentor to a beginning lawyer within a firm, office or practice group will be based on the recommendation of the firm or other employer itself, subject to the qualifications for appointment as a mentor and compliance with the other requirements of the Program.

5. What criteria are used in matching a mentor and a beginning lawyer who are not in the same firm?

The committee will draw upon its own knowledge of potential mentors to make a match with a beginning lawyer. The Program will attempt to match beginning lawyers and mentors based on other criteria, such as similarities of practice area.

6. What are the responsibilities of a “guide”/mentor in the Program?

The “guide”/mentor is responsible for counseling the beginning lawyer about practical skills discussed in the seminars, seasoned judgment, and sensitivity to ethical and professionalism values; devoting the time required for this assignment; and attending six Program seminars and meeting with the beginning lawyer at least six additional times for approximately one hour. At the end of the twelve month program, the “guide”/mentor will be asked to sign a certificate evidencing whether or not the beginning lawyer has attended the required seminars and other meetings.

7. What are responsibilities of a beginning lawyer in the Program?

A beginning lawyer is responsible for attending six seminars and making himself or herself available for the guidance and teaching of their mentors as described herein.

8. Are communications between the mentor and the beginning lawyer confidential?

For an inside the firm or office mentorship, the confidentiality of communications between the mentor and beginning lawyer will depend on the firm's or office's policies. For an outside mentorship, the beginning lawyer shall not reveal to the mentor any confidential communications between the beginning lawyer and the beginning lawyer's client.

9. Will the "guide"/mentor supervise the beginning lawyer's work?

For an inside firm or office mentorship, supervision of the beginning lawyer's work is a matter to be determined by the firm's or office's policy. For an outside mentorship, the mentor is not expected to supervise the practice of law by the beginning lawyer.

10. What is the mentor's role in evaluating the beginning lawyer within the firm or office?

The role of the mentor in evaluating the work and professional development of the beginning lawyer within the firm or office is a matter to be determined by the firm's or office's policy. The mentor and the beginning lawyer both have responsibility for evaluating the mentoring relationship. The mentor is responsible for assessing whether the beginning lawyer has satisfactorily completed the Program.

11. What is the "guide"/mentor's role in evaluation of the beginning lawyer who does not work in the same firm?

The outside mentor assumes no responsibility for evaluating the work of the beginning lawyer. The outside mentor and the beginning lawyer both have responsibility for evaluating the mentoring relationship. The mentor is responsible for assessing whether the beginning lawyer has satisfactorily completed the Program.

12. What happens if the "guide"/mentor resigns from the firm or office or otherwise becomes unavailable to serve as mentor?

The mentor shall notify the Program of the situation. In the event the mentor is unable to do so, the beginning lawyer shall notify the Program of the situation. Decisions regarding how and whether to assign a new mentor will be made on a case-by-case basis. The committee will have the ultimate authority and responsibility for policies and procedures for situations where a mentorship ends prematurely.

13. What happens if the beginning lawyer resigns from the firm or office or otherwise becomes unavailable to continue to be mentored by the originally assigned mentor?

The beginning lawyer shall notify the Program of the situation. In the event the beginning lawyer is unable to do so, the original mentor shall notify the Program. Decisions regarding how and whether to assign a new mentor will be made on a case-by-case basis. The committee will have the ultimate authority and responsibility for policies and procedures for situations where a mentorship ends prematurely.

14. How will the Program deal with problems that arise in the relationship?

A mentor or beginning lawyer with a concern about the Program should convey it to the Chair of the committee.