



Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism

**Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism
Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program**

**Mentoring Program Guide
For Program Administrators**

Revised Edition 2020

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Welcome and Introduction

Thank you for your interest in the statewide Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program. You are joining over 95 organizations across the state offering this valuable Program to their employees, members, or alumni. Bar associations, law firms, law schools, and government agencies all have somewhat different objectives in sponsoring the Program. Still, all share a common goal: *to promote integrity, professionalism, and civility among the newest members of our profession through the passing on of the wisdom and experience of more experienced attorneys.*

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism (“Commission”) developed this *Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program Guide* to assist and support organizations in developing mentoring programs that meet the requirements and intent of Illinois Supreme Court Rule 795(d)(11), making those who complete the Program eligible for professional responsibility CLE credits, including one hour in the area of diversity and inclusion and one hour in the area of mental health and substance abuse pursuant to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 794(d)(2). We are confident that you and your colleagues will find the Program both enjoyable and beneficial.

Acknowledgments

The content of the *Program Guide* was developed from an examination of current research, an exploration of mentoring principles and practices across the country, feedback from the Circuit-Wide Professionalism Initiative of the 17th Judicial Circuit of Illinois, and from the experiences and the legal mentoring work of other states. The Commission gratefully acknowledges, in particular, the Georgia Chief Justice’s Commission on Professionalism, the Ohio Commission on Professionalism, and the 17th Judicial Circuit of Illinois for their contributions to this *Mentoring Program Guide*.

Mentoring Advisory Committee

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Provisions of Illinois Supreme Court Rules

Lawyers completing a comprehensive year-long structured mentoring program, as either a mentor or mentee, may earn credit equal to the minimum professional responsibility credit during the two-year reporting period of completion provided that completion is attested to by both mentor and mentee and occurs during the first five (5) years of the mentee's practice in Illinois. Completion of the Program as a mentor or mentee also satisfies completion of the required CLE credits of at least one hour in the area of diversity and inclusion and at least one hour in the area of mental health and substance abuse pursuant to Illinois Supreme Court Rule 794(d)(2). Note that the total six (6) hours of professional responsibility CLE credit is earned upon the completion of the Program, i.e., at the end of the mentoring year term.

Goals of the Commission in Implementing Rule 795(d)(11)

Mentoring creates an opportunity for an experienced lawyer mentor ("mentor") to provide professional guidance and share practical knowledge and skills with a new lawyer mentee ("mentee") during the critical transition from law student to legal practitioner. Although legal theory and application can be learned during law school, the practice of law is learned in the workplace, whether in private or corporate practice, government service, or public interest work. An effective and successful mentoring program elevates the competence, professionalism, and success of new lawyers.

Skillful mentoring takes time and attention. How the mentors introduce mentees to the profession forms a foundation for their continued growth and development as practitioners. Strong mentors stretch and expand the mentee's abilities and capacities for professional thinking and problem-solving. These mentors also facilitate the development of civility and ethics through consulting, collaborating, and coaching their mentees. By building relationships between new and experienced lawyers, the fundamental skills and core values of professionalism essential to the practice of law are passed on to a new generation of attorneys.

Illinois Supreme Court Rule 795(d)(11) added Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring as an activity that may satisfy the professional responsibility CLE credit in order to:

1. Promote integrity, professionalism, and civility;
2. Advance the commitment to eliminate bias and divisiveness within the legal system;
3. Raise awareness of professional responsibility issues; and
4. Spread best practices and the highest ideals in the practice of law.

To advance these goals, the Commission has developed a process, specific strategies, and resources for skillful Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring, described in this *Mentoring Program Guide*, the accompanying [Mentoring Plan](#) and the [Mentoring Plan Supplement](#) for program participants.

Program Development and Implementation

In creating the Program, the Commission and Advisory Committee determined that sponsoring organizations can provide more successful pairings of mentors and mentees than could the Commission or its staff. Additionally, such organizations are better equipped to assist and guide the mentoring process, for example, by providing venues for team gatherings of the mentoring pairs, opportunities for networking, and education around one or more of the *Mentoring Plan* activities. Thus, the Commission invites any law firm, law school, bar group, corporation, court

judicial district, or state, county or local government agency in Illinois to submit an application to offer their mentoring Program as part of the Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program.

The Commission encourages organizations applying to offer a mentoring program to utilize this *Mentoring Program Guide* and the related *Mentoring Plan* to guide their program development. The *Program Guide* sets forth the required program minimum standards to meet Commission approval, and the *Mentoring Plan* provides a template of discussion topics and learning experiences for the mentor and mentee to complete over the one-year mentoring term.

The *Program Guide* and *Mentoring Plan* may be adopted in whole, or may be modified as needed to provide flexibility and address the interests of the organization developing the Program. The Commission is available to assist organizations in tailoring mentoring programs that will meet approval standards.

Organizations may become a Sponsoring Organization of the Program by completing the Commission's [Organization Application](#). Sponsoring Organizations approved for hosting the Program should follow the standards delineated in this *Program Guide*:

1. Program Administration
2. Mentee Qualifications
3. Mentor Qualifications
4. Orientation for Mentor and Mentee
5. Mentoring Relationship and Term
6. Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities
7. Mentoring Plan

1. Program Administration

The first steps in running your organization's mentoring Program are completing the Commission's online application form and designating a Program Administrator. The job of the Program Administrator is not difficult, but does take about eight to ten hours in the first year, depending on the number of participants in the particular Program.

The Program Administrator is responsible for collecting mentee and mentor applications and confirming that each potential participant satisfies the eligibility requirements, found herein. The Program Administrator is also responsible for matching mentors with mentees, organizing an optional group orientation session for the mentoring pairs, and monitoring the mentoring pairs' progress throughout the mentoring term of one year.

Program Administrators should ensure that each participant completes an online *Mentoring Agreement* at the onset of the Program and, at the end of the mentoring term, an online *CLE Credit and Attestation*. **All participating lawyers are required to complete and submit an online *CLE Credit and Attestation*.**

Program Administrators should instruct the lawyers to complete and submit an online *CLE Credit and Attestation* to receive their professional responsibility CLE certificates via e-mail. Program Administrators should maintain copies of the e-mailed *CLE Credit and Attestation* certificates for three years after their program completion dates as required under Illinois CLE rules.

During the mentoring term, we recommend that Program Administrators contact mentoring participants quarterly by phone or e-mail to answer any questions and to make sure each pair is making progress on their Mentoring Plan. Finally, to the extent extenuating circumstances prevent either lawyer from completing the Program, or if the mentoring relationship is not working, the Program Administrator should use their best efforts to reassign mentors and mentees so that as many participants as possible can have success in the Program.

Administration Checklist:

- ✓ Submit [Organization Application](#) to Commission for approval
- ✓ Collect mentee and mentor applications (in-house programs may use their own process)
- ✓ Confirm participant eligibility
- ✓ Facilitate the matching of mentors with mentees in accordance with preferences
- ✓ Organize the optional group Program orientation session or share the Orientation online module
- ✓ At or shortly after the orientation session, confirm with all participants that they have submitted their online *Mentoring Agreements*
- ✓ Conduct quarterly *Progress Surveys* (highly recommended)
- ✓ Instruct lawyers to complete the online *CLE Credit and Attestation* form to receive professional responsibility CLE credits, or complete the applications on their behalf
- ✓ Maintain a record of participants and program completion dates for three years

2. Mentee Qualifications

Rule 795(d)(11) requires that a mentee complete the Program “within the first five years of his or her practice.” As a practical matter, this means that in order to complete a one-year-long program within the first five (5) years of practice in Illinois, the mentee **must begin the Program no later than four (4) years after being admitted to the Illinois bar.**

A mentee seeking to participate in the mentoring Program and earn the professional responsibility credit must meet the following minimum standards:

- Be registered on the Illinois ARDC Master Roll of Attorneys as active, **or** has sat for the Illinois Bar exam and is awaiting admission to the bar, **or** has submitted an application for admission by motion under Rule 705; and
- Begins the mentoring Program prior to a date four (4) years after the mentee’s admission date in Illinois.

Mentees who meet these eligibility requirements and choose to participate in the Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program may complete and submit the *Mentee Application*, or an application of the Program Administrator’s design, to the Program Administrator. In-House Sponsoring Organizations (law firms, government or corporate offices) should bypass the *Mentee Application* as they are paired internally at the discretion of those organizations.

3. Mentor Qualifications

The success of any Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program depends upon experienced and dedicated lawyers who are willing to commit the time to serve as mentors, and to personally convey the core values and best practices of

the profession to new lawyers. In order to be effective, lawyer mentors should a) value teaching and counseling new attorneys in the development of professional habits, b) strive to improve the legal profession through their mentorship, and c) possess superior interpersonal skills and the ability to facilitate quality discussions about the best practices and highest values of the legal profession.

Rule 795(d)(11) requires that a mentor be “in practice for a minimum of five years.” A lawyer seeking to serve as a mentor shall meet the following minimum standards:

- Be registered on the Illinois ARDC Master Roll of Attorneys as active and in good standing;
- Has been licensed to practice in the highest court of law in any USA state, territory, or the District of Columbia for no fewer than a combined five (5) years; and
- Never have been suspended or disbarred from the practice of law in any state or jurisdiction, and have no formal disciplinary complaints pending.

Lawyers meeting these eligibility requirements and choosing to participate in a Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program may complete and submit a *Mentor Application*, or an application of the Program Administrator’s design, to the Program Administrator. In-House Sponsoring Organizations (law firms, government, or corporate offices) should bypass the *Mentor Application* as they are paired internally at the discretion of those organizations.

Finally, with respect to judges serving as mentors, although the Commission recognizes the invaluable insight and experience that a currently sitting judge could share with a new lawyer mentee, eligibility of judges to serve as a mentor, within the context of an approved mentoring program under Rule 795(d)(11), is limited to retired or former judges only.

4. Online Program Orientation Module

After participants have been identified and matched by the Program Administrator or his or her designees, each Sponsoring Organization shall present the online orientation module designed to provide mentors and mentees with an overview of the Program, including its purpose and goals. Orientation participation is **mandatory** for all mentors and mentees participating in the Program, and does **not** count as one of the minimum eight required meetings.

The online orientation module addresses effective communication, problem-solving strategies, and the resources that are available to assist participants in building a successful mentoring relationship. Group orientation programs are strongly encouraged because they can serve as a starting point in developing not only the relationship between the mentor and mentee, but also relationships with the other program participants and individuals in the legal community. Further, group orientation programs have the advantages of being able to ensure that all instructions are understood by the mentoring participants.

Topics addressed in the online orientation module include:

1. Benefits of Mentoring
2. Requirements for Program Completion and CLE Credit
3. Mentoring agreement, mentoring Plan & resources
4. Problem-solving
5. Generational communication

5. Mentoring Relationship and Term

The mentor may be either internal or external to the mentee's place of work. There are decided advantages to both internal and external pairings which should be considered in matching mentees with mentors. Internal mentoring participants are able to discuss many different matters relating to clients because of the shared responsibility of liability and the confidentiality that extends to office employees. External mentoring participants may feel a greater sense of comfort in discussing sensitive workplace matters with someone who is not a co-worker. When possible, the desires of both the mentor and mentee should be taken into account.

At the start of the mentoring term, the participants must complete an online *Mentoring Agreement* which defines the parameters of the mentoring relationship and limits potential liability for external mentoring pairs, if applicable.

To earn professional responsibility credit for participation in a Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program under Rule 795(d)(11), participants must complete the Program within the one-year mentoring term. (The Program Administrator may grant reasonable extensions at his or her discretion.) Although the structured mentoring period is only one year, it is hoped that participants will choose to continue the relationship after the term is over.

Mentoring CLE credit is available only for the completion of the mentoring Program by one mentor-mentee pair at a time. Multiple pairings may occur, but CLE may only be earned under one qualifying pair for the term. Nevertheless, participants, both mentors and mentees, may repeat the Program and earn additional CLE credit. Consult the MCLE rules for carryover allowances and other considerations.

6. Mentor and Mentee Responsibilities

The first activity that the mentoring pair will participate in together is the required orientation, although, as noted above, this does not count as one of the minimum eight required meetings. As part of the orientation (or shortly thereafter), the mentor and mentee will complete the online *Mentoring Agreement*.

This *Mentoring Plan* will guide the activities of the mentoring pair over the term of the Program. Specifically, the mentee and mentor should discuss and determine their planned topics of discussion and shared professional experiences to benefit from the action items contained throughout the *Mentoring Plan*.

Frequent interaction between the mentor and mentee is encouraged. While communication will likely occur through a variety of means, including e-mail, telephone, and text messaging, at least eight (8) in-person meetings or video-based communications during the course of the year are required.

At the end of the one-year Program term, the Program Administrator should instruct lawyers to complete the online [Mentoring Attestation and CLE Certification](#) form to obtain professional responsibility CLE credit, or it may be completed on behalf of the applicants.

Mentor and Mentee Checklist

- ✓ Participate in the online orientation module
- ✓ Submit your online *Mentoring Agreement* at or soon after your orientation
- ✓ Participate in a minimum of eight (8) face-to-face or video conference meetings over the one-year term
- ✓ Participate in discussions and activities as a pair covering all five (5) categories of the professional responsibility
- ✓ Complete the online Mentoring Attestation and CLE Certification form to obtain professional responsibility CLE credit

In-Person Meetings Exception (Virtual Meetings Allowed) – New in 2020

As an organization dedicated to promoting professional responsibility in the legal and judicial professions, the well-being of those we serve is our highest priority. We want to make it as easy as possible for those participating in our mentoring Program to connect with each during this time where social distancing is being urged.

Therefore, due to concerns about COVID-19, and in accordance with guidance from the [Illinois Supreme Court](#), those participating in our lawyer-to-lawyer mentoring Program may hold any or all their required minimum eight in-person meetings over the one-year term through the use of a video-assisted communication channel, such as Skype, Zoom, FaceTime or other video conferencing. This exception will be valid through December 31, 2020.

7. Mentoring Plan

The *Mentoring Plan* defines the learning experiences, similar to a curriculum, for each mentoring pair. Pairs select their meeting action item in the *Plan* to complete at each mentoring meeting. As noted above, a Sponsoring Organization may use the Commission's *Mentoring Plan* or supplement to it to meet its customized objectives.

In developing their individualized *Mentoring Plan*, each mentoring pair must select and complete at least one specific action item in each of the following five categories of the professional responsibility CLE requirements (see Rule 794(d)(1)):

1. Professionalism
2. Legal Ethics
3. Civility
4. Diversity and Inclusion
5. Wellness, Mental Health, and Addiction

The actions may be customized within each category to the particular practice setting, individual needs or goals, and the experience of the mentor. All categories of the *Mentoring Plan* form contain blank "alternative action" lines to allow participants to agree upon substitute or additional action items. The Program is designed to be very flexible: to the extent interests or needs change during the course of the mentoring relationship, the mentoring pair may agree to add, delete or substitute an activity from their original Plan.

The mentor and mentee may engage in as many of the actions as are of mutual interest, taking the mentee's interests, and the mentor's experience, into account. Action items may be addressed via social networking, and other technology supports, so long as the minimum eight required meetings are held. Finally, mentoring pairs are encouraged to supplement the *Mentoring Plan* with other mutually interesting actions they discover over the

mentoring term, as well as to discuss concepts that are introduced in the new lawyer's Basic Skills course. Engaging in additional meetings will not result in receiving more CLE credit.

Mentoring pairs also may decide to group into mentoring teams in order to foster collaboration, broaden exposure to diverse practice areas, and extend additional resources and support to program participants. Program Administrators can facilitate these group meetings by sharing contact information among all mentoring pairs, and organizing group events.

The Commission has developed a companion document to support the implementation of the *Mentoring Plan*. This *Mentoring Plan Supplement* provides activities, discussion items, and references for each action item in the *Mentoring Plan* template.

Professional Responsibility CLE Credit

As the one-year term comes to an end, the Program Administrator should send each mentor and mentee an online link to the [Mentoring Attestation and CLE Certification](#) form for their completion. Alternatively, the Program Administrator may complete the application on each attorney's behalf. The Commission will issue a Professional Responsibility CLE Certificate via e-mail directly to the lawyer with an e-mailed copy to the Program Administrator for retention for the required three years under MCLE rules.

Upon successful completion of the Program and application for credit, each lawyer will receive a total of six (6) hours of professional responsibility CLE credit. For mentors, the total credit hours will be granted for the year in which the mentoring term concludes, or can be carried over to the next reporting period. For new lawyers, credits may be applied to meet the first-year Basic Skills CLE requirements, even before completing the Program, or can be carried over into the first two-year reporting period. **Partial credit is not available.** Consult the MCLE rules for carryover allowances and other considerations.

Thank you again for your much appreciated assistance and participation in the Program, and for your contributions to professionalism in Illinois. We at the Commission thank you!



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