

PROFESSIONALISM ORIENTATION FACILITATOR GUIDE

Thank you for being a facilitator for the Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism's Orientation Program. You likely will be the first person to introduce your group of law students to various professionalism issues that confront practicing lawyers. This Facilitator Guide will help you frame that introduction.

INTRODUCTION TO THE ORIENTATION PROGRAM

The Professionalism Orientation Program takes place every year at all nine Illinois law schools. An Illinois Supreme Court or Appellate Court Justice speaks to incoming 1L students about professionalism and then issues to the students the Pledge of Professionalism. Several of the law schools also have facilitated small group discussions where you, the attorney facilitator, use hypothetical scenarios to illustrate for your small group issues of civility, diversity, ethics and professionalism in daily practice.

As an attorney facilitator, you will be given the Orientation Scenarios Discussion Guide to review beforehand. The Discussion Guide provides answers to the scenarios, as well as suggestions for further discussion. The Discussion Guide should only be used as a starting point. You should also bring in personal experiences from your practice when facilitating discussion.

PROGRAM LOGISTICS

Please arrive at the orientation site fifteen minutes prior to either the start of the Justice's speech, or fifteen minutes prior to the start of the facilitated discussions. Please bring with you a copy of the Discussion Guide. A member of the Commission staff and the law school administration will be at the site to greet you. In addition, as the Justices will be dressed in robes and the law students will be dressed in formal business attire, we request that you also wear **formal business attire** while serving as a facilitator.

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Once you enter your assigned room and the students are all seated, introduce yourself and your practice area. The discussion groups will be approximately 15-25 students. Because the students do not know each other at this point in the year, give them an opportunity to introduce themselves at least by first name.

Start your discussion with a brief statement of what “professionalism” in the legal community means. Consider telling the students that lawyers are naturally leaders in their community, and “professionalism” encompasses the great responsibility they will undertake as lawyers and the much higher standard they will be held to. All of the students will have already listened (or immediately afterwards will listen) to a speech by an Illinois Supreme Court or Appellate Court Justice and will have taken the Pledge of Professionalism. You can use both of those to frame your introduction.

Following your brief statement, direct the students’ attention to the discussion scenarios, already provided by the law school. The students will likely not have yet read the scenarios. You will need to decide ahead of time which scenario to start with and either read the scenario out loud, or give the students time to review the scenario.

HOW TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION

The goal of this program is to facilitate a fruitful discussion with your small group of law students on ethics and professionalism using the assigned hypothetical scenarios. We neither want you to engage in a casual conversation with the students, nor to lecture at the students. The students should do most of the talking, with your skilled assistance encouraging the discussion.

In order to facilitate a successful discussion, you should:

- a. Ask the students the pre-assigned questions and open the room for discussion.
- b. Listen to and provide feedback on the students’ comments.
- c. Encourage other students to provide feedback on the students’ comments.
- d. Offer your own comments based on the Discussion Guide as well as your own personal experience.
- e. Ask other questions that arise out of the discussion, for example, different twists on the hypothetical scenarios.
- f. Summarize salient points of the discussion and ask other students for their opinions.
- g. Conclude the discussion.

Throughout the discussion, we recommend you focus on three professionalism traits required of lawyers:

- a. *Absolute honesty*: even when you think the truth hurts you, avoid misleading others, even if you are expressing “the truth” by omission or resorting to “technicalities”;

- b. *Integrity*: keeping your word, following the letter and the spirit of the law, and treating all others with dignity and respect; and
- c. *Civility*: demonstrating the proper respect to others; actively acknowledging that some individuals (whether due to age, gender, ethnicity, race, etc.) may feel uncomfortable in various interactions with lawyers, and taking efforts to alleviate those feelings of difference, insecurity, or anxiety.

If the group discussion on one scenario is going well, feel free to stay with that scenario. While covering all three scenarios is encouraged, it is far more important to have an in-depth discussion that the students will find useful for their future practice.

In order to keep interest high, it helps to compare and contrast comments between students. For example, in Scenario 1, if you were Carmen, now that I've told you about the ethical rule, how would you react to what your colleague just said?

Finally, Scenario 3 demonstrates the importance of diversity and inclusion in the legal profession. Almost all larger law firms have diversity coordinators and diversity committees. Moreover, diversity is one of the five areas that the Illinois Supreme Court has qualified for professional responsibility CLE credit. A discussion of Scenario 3 will make the students aware of the value the legal profession places on diversity and inclusion today. It also provides students with diversity issues on different levels (age, gender, race). A facilitated conversation on those issues will bring awareness and help develop an understanding of issues faced by people of different backgrounds. This awareness will help promote a richer and more productive environment both at school and later when they join the workforce.

CLE CERTIFICATE

Approximately two weeks following the conclusion of your Orientation Program, you will receive a CLE Certificate via e-mail awarding you 1.5 hours of CLE credit.

Thank you for volunteering for the Commission's Orientation Program, and helping train the next generation of lawyers and leaders.

For more information on the Professionalism Orientation program and the facilitated discussions, please take a look at our [Law School Resources](#). If you have any questions about the program, or would be willing to share feedback after the program, please email Lindsay Shaw at lindsay.shaw@2civility.org.