GUIDE TO MENTORING
WHAT IS A MENTOR?

Mentors are not only counselors and advisors, they are also those who have a unique opportunity to share their knowledge and experience with someone else. Some may even think of mentoring as an act of servant leadership where the focus is on the follower, addressing his or her needs in order to improve organizational performance. A mentor is someone who offers knowledge, insight, perspective, and wisdom that is useful to another person. Mentoring is a process whereby mentor and mentee work together to discover and develop a mentee's abilities, to provide him or her with knowledge and skills as opportunities and needs arise, and for the mentor to serve as a tutor, friend, and foil who enables a mentee to sharpen skills. It is clear, however one may define mentoring, that mentors make a difference and the kind and extent of that difference is primarily up to the mentor.

Mentoring is one of the broadest methods of encouraging human growth. Mentoring is usually related to careers, but mentors can touch a personal facet of an individual if their offerings are applied in various aspects of life. Mentor styles range from that of a persistent encourager who helps build self-confidence to that of a task master who teaches to appreciate excellence in performance. Mentoring can have a significant effect on the life or style of another person, generally as a result of one-on-one contact.

Traditionally, mentoring is a formal process whereby an older, more experienced person helps and guides a younger person in learning the ropes in an organization or on the job. The term "mentoring" has also been used to describe the activities of a senior person in preparing a junior person for a particular office or job, providing career guidance and encouraging high standards of performance. Mentors may also be senior people in an organization who take talented young people under their wings and teach these protégés. Mentoring can be carried out
informally, as part of a friendship, or more formally, as part of a highly structured new employee training program in any employment setting.

WHAT MENTORS DO

Mentors ...

- Set high expectations of performance
- Offer challenging ideas
- Help build self-confidence
- Encourage and demonstrate professional behavior
- Offer friendship
- Confront negative behaviors and attitudes and offer solutions
- Teach by example
- Provide growth experiences
- Explain how the organization works
- Coach the mentee
- Stand by the mentee in critical situations
- Offer wise counsel
- Encourage solid behavior
- Inspire mentees
- Share critical knowledge
- Offer encouragement
- Check in weekly with mentee to ensure they are "fitting in"
- Assist with the development of the mentee's career
- Lunch on a monthly basis to discuss progress
HOW DO YOU MENTOR?

Mentoring involves making the most of any situation. This view tends to concern individuals who expect a specific outline to performing any task. They want to know exactly what they are supposed to do, how to do it, and when to do it. To tell them that mentoring is part intuition, part feelings and part hunch, made up as you go along, and composed of whatever you have available at the moment, is too uncertain for some people. However, that's really what mentoring is.

For example, a senior paralegal may take an entry level paralegal with no experience under their wings. This form of mentoring may involve teaching the entry level paralegal the ropes of being a paralegal, setting high standards of performance, challenging the mentee to meet the NFPA Code of Professional Responsibility, and providing encouragement during the very rough initial period of employment. Whether the relationship is formed between paralegals or any other legal support professionals, the perspective remains the same.

Mentoring involves going above and beyond. It is a relationship in which a person with greater experience, expertise and wisdom, counsels, teaches, guides, and helps a junior (or new) employee to develop professionally. Viewing the role of a mentor as a formal position may risk performing your duties in a perfunctory fashion; simply holding the title of mentor and missing the essence of the experience. Are you prepared to invest time and effort in helping someone else? Are you ready to make a commitment? Do you have the time, the skills, and freedom to devote yourself to helping another person perform at a higher level?

Mentoring changes your life, if only in small ways. Impromptu, off-the-cuff mentoring requires a heightened awareness of the needs of others and a willingness to pause and listen.
Taking on a mentoring situation may mean occasional inconvenience and less time for other responsibilities. Mentoring may conflict with commitments or activities. It can also mean a substantial personal change; perhaps a willingness to listen more and talk less. Mentors need to believe in the value of their work without worrying about returned favors. If you have, or can develop, a freely giving nature, you will probably be mentoring for the rest of your life.

Mentoring can range from a spur of the moment intervention to an intense long-term relationship. The mentee's needs and mentor's resources vary over time, reflecting the different styles that work in each employment setting. Mentoring respects the uniqueness of the mentor/mentee relationship and strives to enhance the special strengths of each person. It helps for mentors to remember that a desire to "do it my way" may be critical to a mentee's sense of self. Doing something the mentor's way may lessen mentee ownership, and it may be a way for the mentee to avoid significant thought or responsibility. It may also be uncomfortable for the mentee. Because mentees may choose to do something their own way and not appear to do what is expected, mentors may not recognize that their mentoring has been effective. An effective mentor lets go or does not take charge of the mentee.

As a mentor you should:

• Focus on basic principles and fundamentals. This may not be a static activity. Applying fundamentals to new challenges requires constant reassessment, discussion, and even argument until new wisdom is forged. Supreme Court Justices and good managers do this.

• Keep abreast of new developments in the field and their implications. This is the more dynamic source of mentoring. It means that a mentor's task of self-development, learning, and mastering is never finished.
Mentoring itself is an evolving field. If, as a mentor, you choose to master more active listening or coaching skills, effective confrontation techniques, or new methods of resolving conflict, you are starting a journey of self-development and life-long learning.

**UNDERSTANDING MENTEE'S NEEDS**

A mentee generally has needs that may be shared with others in a similar situation. The mentee may have a personal agenda, values, limitations, and aspirations. This personal agenda may be complicated by your guidance as the mentor. The mentee is called upon to consider changes offered by the mentor, which may be generated by a challenging opportunity or revealing personal insight. Managing this change is a continuous and constant process. Mentees may feel a sense of loss from giving up comfortable beliefs and behaviors. The fear of failure is always utmost in their mind and ironically, there is anxiety once success is achieved; mentees may feel they are not measuring up to your expectations. Often you will find yourself in the role of simply "being there"; to listen or to be a friend. The mentor's challenge is to recognize the needs of a person adapting to change and responding appropriately.

We all have a need for confidence and a positive self-image. Some people suffer from generalized low self-esteem and tend to have negative feelings about specific aspects of themselves or talents they possess. Focusing on the negatives frequently makes it difficult for a person to generate the motivation to make positive changes. This may be the first "full time" job your mentee has had so try to remember your first job when you guide your mentee. The primary role of the mentor is to provide genuine confidence, building insights and experiences.

While we are often taught not to "toot our own horns," the job of the mentor is sometimes to make the mentee stop the self-deprecation that may come with inexperience. It is one thing to
suffer defeat and be discouraged, but quite another to continually dwell on it. To avoid this, a mentor can:

- Listen to the negativism, without evaluating, thus giving the mentee a chance to vent negative feelings.
- Provide ideas, when asked.
- Offer help if the mentee needs it, once the mentee has decided on a problem-solving course of action.

If you can get your mentee to believe what things would be like if they successfully accomplish the change, they will begin to do things to move toward that goal. This is a mental adjustment that needs to be done in positive terms. You must shift the mentee's mental context from today's problems to tomorrow's answers. Obviously you cannot expect instant change. Mentees will need a lot of coping mechanisms to deal with the stress of change but mentors can help mentees expand that range.

Helping a mentee grow is not always easy. A mentee is living his/her own life, has a variety of demands from a variety of sources, and is changing daily in numerous ways. No matter how little we seem to change, remaining the same is not possible.

Some mentee changes may be very dramatic, while others may be almost negligible. Some may even be hidden. If the mentoring relationship is a continuing one, the mentor may need to:

- Pick up on subtle concerns.
- Notice small or gradual changes.
- Read verbal as well as non-verbal signals.
SEVEN TYPES OF MENTOR ASSISTANCE

There are seven types of mentor assistance that are helpful in encouraging mentee growth:

🎉 Helping your mentee shift mental contacts

Imagination is critical in any person's development. New employees need to be able to imagine themselves as successful, and as an accepted member of the team. Mentors must encourage mentees to create a satisfying new context for their work - a personal vision. We all do this transformation subconsciously as we mature, but some people get stuck. Helping your mentees to create a personal concept of what excellence would look like can move them toward the goal of being successful. Mentors help their mentees see worthy goals and move toward reaching them.

🎉 Listening when the mentee has a problem

How many times have you wished you had somebody to talk to about things that were bothering you without having the other person be critical? This is what you need to do for your mentee. Provide an ear without taking on the mentee's problem, giving advice, or joining them in the "it’s a failure" game. Listening is the ability to become absorbed in what your mentee tells you while gaining insight into the mentee's problem. Many mentors believe that listening is the strongest part of mentoring.
Identifying mentee feelings and verifying them

Another mentoring function is to help mentees solve problems they encounter by listening, coaching, providing information, exploring options, and even through direct intervention.

Effectively confronting negative behaviors

As a mentor, you will frequently find it necessary to confront an attitude, behavior, or plan of your mentee. To criticize, threaten, or pressure the mentee to adopt another course may lower the mentee's self-esteem and be ineffective. Sometimes the best message confrontation is the "I" which entails a neutral description of what you perceive the mentee intends, along with a statement of the possible negative effects on the mentee or other people, while wrapping up with your personal feelings. You don't tell a mentee what to do; rather you give him or her information with which decisions can be made.

Providing appropriate information

If you don't know the answer to your mentee's question, find the answer; don't make it up.

Delegating authority or giving permission

Show the mentee "how" to give direction/instructions.

Exploring other options

There is a solution to every problem; sometimes you have to look harder.
NEGATIVE BEHAVIORS

Mentors want their mentees to be successful and to be effective, productive, and happy. Three potentially negative behaviors to watch out for: criticizing, giving advice, and rescuing your mentee from his or her own mistake.

Criticism is evaluative and judgmental. When you offer constructive criticism, the message should be helpful but sometimes your intentions may be undercut by the way criticism damages self-esteem. Avoiding criticism does not mean accepting negative behaviors or performance failures. When a mentee's behavior is not up to snuff, you need to think about what type of intervention would be best.

What else can you do other than criticize? Mentors often give their best when they help mentees break out of continual negative patterns of behavior. When a person continually makes the same mistake, the solution is not to give them the answer over and over again; the best option may be to identify the repetitive elements so that these can be changed. For example, if your mentee continually fails from an on-the-job performance standpoint, instead of encouraging the mentee to do better, complaining, or warning them of the consequences, a new analysis might be helpful. A performance failure can be viewed as the gap between what is needed and what is being produced. This gap needs to be described, and a mutual plan developed for closing the gap so that the problem disappears. The performance gap is described in neutral, not evaluative terms. Mentor and mentee need to cooperate in problem solving.

Many mentors believe, incorrectly, that most of their job is giving advice to the mentees. There is a huge downside to giving advice! When we give advice, we assume we have superior knowledge, insight, or wisdom related to the problem. This may or may not be true. We can best work with our mentees by:
• Repeating back what you hear to confirm that you heard and understood the problem.
• Providing ideas or information which a mentee could use to solve his or her own problem.

Most mentees do not really want advice though they may value your experience. Effective mentors stick with helping. They share, model and teach but they do not take over problems unless there is a crisis that requires immediate action. (This would be very rare.)

The problem with rescuing is that some mentees, because they feel inadequate, may set themselves up for continual failure. Some of us do this every day. When dysfunctional behavior occurs at work for a mentee, a mentor can help by pointing out the repetitive nature of the action. Rescuing the mentee is not likely to help in the long run. If there is a recurring pattern of rescue, the mentee simply knows that the mentor will, at some point in time, help them.

**MENTEE-MENTOR PARTNERSHIP**

Mentoring is frequently seen as a one way street with the mentor giving and the mentee receiving. However, mentoring may be viewed as a reciprocal relationship; a kind of partnership with both parties contributing to the discussion. The mentor will clearly have more experience and wisdom but the mentee may be able to contribute as well. You have to remember that your mentee is an adult and that you are not trying to clone yourself but to expand your mentee's horizons so that he or she is successful.

Sadly, some mentoring relations can end badly in anger, quarreling, or disappointment. These partings often result from unmet expectations. Expectations may be subconscious and never surface until it is too late. An effort should be made to address your mentee's expectations...
at the beginning of the relationship. Here are some suggestions as to find out what your mentee's expectations are:

- Ask your mentee to describe what he or she expects from the mentor/mentee relationship, both in the short and long term.
- Ask the mentee to identify his or her perception of the responsibilities in the mentor/mentee relationship.
- Ask the mentee to list any special needs he or she may have for the relationship.

It is important that the mentor not overreact to a mentee's expectations. If a mentee's expectations are more than a mentor is willing to give, the mentor program coordinator should be notified immediately.

You can make your mentoring as formal or informal as you like. It can be a long or a short term investment, but you must be available for the first two to three weeks of the mentee's employment with the organization to establish an effective relationship.

Happy Mentoring, and thank you for taking on this challenging opportunity!
CHECKLIST FOR MENTORS

DAY ONE

• Meet and greet the mentee, choosing someone to accompany you who may have particular relevance to your new hire (e.g., HR Director or your direct report).

• Discuss the role of the mentor and the mentee and determine the mentee's expectations. By the end of the day, make sure the mentee understands your expectations for their performance.

• Take the mentee on a tour of the office, including all floors and services, focusing on those that will have significance to the mentee.

• Introduce mentee to attorneys and/or other staff with whom they will be working.

• Introduce mentee to secretary and floor coordinator, as appropriate.

• Take mentee to lunch with one an appropriate staff member (e.g., paralegal, litigation analyst, docket clerk, etc.).

WEEK ONE

• Check on mentee daily to make sure they have work and can find things.

• Take the mentee around the office again, because they won't remember anything from Day One.

• Introduce mentee to specific practice support staff and go to lunch as a group. Think of this as an informal gathering and an opportunity to become better acquainted in a more casual setting. Your location of choice may be the office’s cafeteria (if available), or a local restaurant.

• Introduce mentee to all managers in each department and practice support staff and/or related staff in all departments.

• Review every office form, including time sheets and overtime preparation.

WEEK TWO

• Review vacation, sick time, paid-time-off, reimbursement, and related policies with mentee.

• Review forms again.
• Involve mentee in any extracurricular office activities that may be going on (softball, baseball, pro bono projects).

• Find out how mentee is doing.

• Advise Director of Legal Support Services or other appropriate supervisory reports of any concerns.

• Take mentee to lunch [in office, if available] (reimbursable).

**WEEKS THREE – SIX**

• Check on mentee at least twice a week to ensure they are being integrated into the organization.

• Include mentee in as many staff activities as possible (make sure mentee knows when there is a departmental luncheon, social activity, etc.).

• Review forms continuously.

**ONGOING**

• Meet with mentee weekly.

• Include mentee in your plans with other practice support staff.

• Attend mentee/mentor luncheons with Director of Legal Support Services and/or other appropriate Reports.
CHECKLIST FOR MENTEES

DAY ONE

- Meet mentor.
- Discuss the role of the mentor and determine the mentor's expectations.
- Tour office with mentor.
- Meet practice support staff and/or related staff with mentor.
- With mentor, meet attorneys and other staff with whom you will work.
- Join mentor for lunch.

WEEK ONE

- Review timesheets with mentor.
- Review forms with mentor.

WEEK TWO

- Join mentor for various organization functions (softball, baseball, case meetings, etc.).
- Advise mentor of any concerns.

WEEKS THREE – SIX

- Meet with mentor at least twice a week.
- Review forms with mentor.

ONGOING

- Attend regular mentee/mentor luncheons with Director of Legal Support Services or other appropriate Reports.
- Meet with mentor weekly
- Advise mentor of any issues

As a new member of the organization, you are important and have a role in ensuring its continued success. Daunting though this new challenge may be, take advantage of every
opportunity to ask questions and discuss your concerns with your mentor and/or direct report. Discussing those concerns and asking questions can help to resolve problems and allay fears. All questions are important, and all concerns are valid. Thank you for taking on this challenging opportunity!
I have read the Guide to Mentoring and will commit to mentoring ______________________, commencing on _____________, 20__.

________________________________________
Signature

Original to Practice Support Manager/Appropriate Supervisory Report