

## **NCAPA MENTORSHIP PROGRAM**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Why do we need a Mentoring Program?**

Many paralegals who have significant potential do not have mentors to help them identify their strengths, improve their performance, and set career goals. The mentoring program is a link to bring paralegals together who want to help others learn how to achieve their goals and those who are willing to take the initiative and seek a mentor's guidance. At the organizational level, the NCAPA hopes to encourage the use of mentoring as a developmental tool.

#### **What are the program's goals and objectives?**

NCAPAs mentoring program's goal is to provide mentees with the (a) coaching; (b) job and career information; (c) feedback counseling; and, (d) caring a mentor can give. Mentoring is an approach that provides members with the kind of support that often results in their making substantial contributions to the organization. To provide access to as broad a group as possible, mentors and mentees will vary by area of law, experience and other factors.

#### **For mentees, what are the objectives?**

- Gain exposure to different options, perspectives, and organizational cultures.
- Expand the range of contacts, and develop an ability to create their own networks.
- Discover and understand "the rules of the game" in the work world.
- Develop a greater sense of career direction and improved job performance.

#### **What can the program do for me as a mentee?**

It is up to you to take the initiative and take action. You must set your own goals for self-improvement, better work performance, and long-term career strategy. Your mentor will be there to serve as a guide, to help you refine your goals, and to support you as you work towards achieving them. However, it is up to you to personally achieve the goals you have set for yourself. They will help you refine your career plans, but cannot intervene for you.

#### **What can my mentor do for me?**

Your mentor can help you make a plan and encourage you to pursue it strategically. Your mentor can tell you how others see you and suggest ways to make positive changes. However, your mentor cannot make a decision for you, run your career, make calls for you, or use his or her influence for you. You have to take the initiative to do those things for yourself.

#### **How do mentors benefit from the Mentoring Program?**

Apart from the satisfaction of helping another person reach goals he or she has set, many mentors develop a new perspective, learn about another organization or area of law, gain additional insight into their own paths and values, and go through a reflective process similar to the mentee's. As they help someone else evaluate their career issues and goals, mentors often find themselves doing some worthwhile soul searching about their own careers as well. Given the opportunity to personally witness the positive impact of mentoring on the mentees, mentors are often inspired to reach out to their employees in more supportive ways or to seek informal mentors for themselves.

#### **What is expected of the mentees?**

Each mentee is responsible for defining a career goal and strategy (with the help of the mentor) and for striving to achieve career goals. At the logistical level, the mentee is responsible for meeting with the mentor at least two hours per month for the six-month period of the Program, developing a contract with the mentor and sending it to the Committee, responding to committee follow-ups to ensure the pair is progressing, evaluating their progress in the mentoring action plan,

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sharing information with other mentees through informal gatherings, and participating in the final evaluation process.

#### **How many mentees and mentors will be selected?**

Anyone can be a mentor if he/she is willing to make the commitment. A mentor needs to be able to listen, offer suggestions, and maintain confidentiality. A mentor does not have to intervene for the mentee or tell them what to do. The Program recruiting process is to ensure the best possible match. Every mentee is guaranteed a match.

#### **What if I know someone with whom I would like to be matched?**

Both people must apply. Please indicate on both of your application forms that you would like to be matched. NCAPA does not guarantee the match, since it has to consider the needs of the group as a whole but will attempt to accommodate you.

#### **How will a mentor and mentee work together?**

The mentor and mentee will work together to develop and sign an agreement that indicates what each is responsible for, what the goals of the relationship are, how they assess how they are doing, and any other pertinent information.

#### **What if I am not comfortable with my mentor/mentee?**

The purpose of your first meeting is to see whether the two of you are compatible. The match is not final until you have both approved it. The Committee will check-in with you to see how your relationship is going and whether you are moving towards the goals you set. Please let the Committee know if things are not working the way you had hoped. Often, a problem in a relationship is a question of miscommunication that can be cleared up through open discussion. Occasionally, re-matching will be necessary, but normally re-matching will be considered only during the first three to six months of the program.

#### **How much time can I spend with my mentor/mentee?**

You are given a recommended amount of one hour of official time each month to meet. It is up to you to negotiate and arrange meetings to ensure that mentoring does not interfere with your regular duties. If you must travel a significant distance to meet, consider meeting at the beginning or end of the day to make it more efficient, or consolidate your time together into longer meetings and meet fewer times during a month. You and your partner may agree to meet more than the one hour a month. Additional time must be spent outside of the normal working hours "on your own time," e.g. during weekends.

#### **How long does the Program last?**

Each Program will last six (6) months. However, participants are encouraged to continue their relationship based on their availability.

#### **Where does the Program fit in the NCAPA approach to career development?**

It is important for all of us to access our skills and developmental needs on a regular basis. Periodic self-evaluations can help identify the challenges we currently face and the skills and personal resources we need to successfully meet. The Program is a tool, which enables the participants to make a self-assessment based on the knowledge that they will receive from mentors. The Program will consist of a diversified group of participants who will share experiences, be empowered, and encouraged to approach their individual career development.