

Mentorship Program Handbook

NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION



NCAPA Mentorship Committee

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National Capital Area Paralegal Association (NCAPA)

Mentorship Program Handbook

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National Capital Area Paralegal Association
Mentorship Program Handbook

Introduction

The National Capital Area Paralegal Association (“NCAPA”) recognizes the value of mentoring as an instrument of organizational learning. The Mentorship Program, which was launched in 2014 by Pascale Goddard (former NCAPA Director) and Christine Villarreal (former NCAPA Director), is an integral part of NCAPA's culture to help new members and new paralegals realize their potential and achieve their goals. Additionally, it is intended to help participants develop personally and professionally and to enhance their professional relationships. This program matches experienced paralegals and legal professionals (“mentors”) with entry-level professionals or new members (“mentees”) from a variety of legal areas and expertise.

This program has the potential to broaden skills, experience, and expertise throughout NCAPA. The Mentorship Program provides mentors an opportunity to share their knowledge, provide guidance and offer new members and paralegals advice. The program helps strengthen the skills of seasoned NCAPA members and enhances the professional and career skills of paralegals who are starting their paralegal/legal career or joining NCAPA. Mentors will help mentees learn how to navigate various situations, improve their developmental skills, and avoid some pitfalls that could potentially sidetrack a career or delay promotion opportunities. This document provides recommended guidelines for establishing the NCAPA Mentorship Program.

What is Mentorship?

- **Tutoring:** Passing on knowledge, identifying and closing gaps in a learner’s knowledge and needs.
- **Coaching:** Providing specialized attention to the individual being coached to help improve performance.
- **Counseling:** Providing feedback to help improve individual behavior or general performance of duties and align the interests of the individual with the interests of the organization/employer.
- **Mentoring:** Using the mentor’s knowledge, insight, perspective, and wisdom to help mentees achieve their personal satisfaction and fulfillment. Mentoring may also include aspects of coaching and counseling.

General Policy

All NCAPA members are eligible to participate in the program. All participants of the program are encouraged to commit to a six-month formal mentoring partnership. At the end of the six-month commitment period, the formal support will end. However,

participants will be invited to continue their partnership on an informal basis, including future mentoring activities. Time spent on developmental activities will vary depending on the agreement signed by the mentor and mentee. It is recommended that partners meet at least once a month for one hour or twice a month for 30 minutes. Each partnership will work out an arrangement that is best for both parties.

Mentorship Program Overview

Management

The Mentorship Program is managed and administered by the Mentorship Committee (the “Committee”). The Committee will provide support and monitor program activities to ensure that objectives are being met. The Committee and NCAPA Board of Directors will evaluate the program periodically. Feedback will be solicited from both mentors and mentees.

Administration

The Committee matches mentors and mentees based on similar areas of interest and other criteria if they have not already chosen a mentor or mentee independently. The Committee will conduct an orientation and training throughout the year for mentors and mentees. Mentors will have a formal meeting with the mentee for at least one hour a month to build confidence and explore any issues, new challenges, or simply gain a different perspective of the legal profession. The one-hour monthly requirement could be split into two 30-minute check-ins a month or as one one-hour check-in a month. This will provide the mentee(s) with a sounding board to explore career options and open up new communication channels and learning opportunities. Mentors serve as a coach, teacher, counselor, and challenger to help the mentee navigate various situations and avoid challenges that could occur, especially early in the mentee’s career. **Committee approval is required to participate in the program.**

Program Length

The 2021 program will run for six (6) months from May 2021 to November 2021. After that time, the Committee and NCAPA Board of Directors will re-evaluate and make adjustments to the program. Each participating mentee and mentor must agree to work together for six (6) months minimum.

Time Requirement

A reasonable amount of official time (up to one hour per month) is recommended for mentoring relationships. At the discretion of the mentee and mentor, other sessions may be scheduled on their own time. Each mentoring relationship will vary according to needs and interests; there are no restrictions on mentoring. Participants are urged to “check-in” frequently with one another via phone calls or emails.

Mentor Matching Process

The Committee will propose matches of mentors and mentees and will determine final matches. The Committee shall match the mentor and mentee based on similar areas of interest or other criteria. Efforts will be made to match mentees with mentors who can best support their respective developmental needs. Both mentee and mentor shall agree upon final matches.

A system has been incorporated in the Program in the event that an initial match or ongoing relationship is not satisfactory; provisions will be made for re-matching. The mentor and mentee may turn to the Committee for guidance and assistance. Unsatisfactory mentoring relationships may be terminated at any time during the six-month period by contacting the Committee. An attempt will be made to match the mentee with another mentor. Normally re-matching will only be undertaken during the first month of the program.

Program Support

The Committee will serve as the program coordinator and conduct orientation and support mentors and mentees throughout the year. The orientation will consist of an overview of the Mentorship Program, expectations, time commitments, other aspects of the program, and help to address questions from participating members of the Mentorship Program. The orientation will also assist mentors with developing goals and a learning plan for their mentee(s).

The Committee shall provide guidance and support for mentors and mentees throughout the year. All mentors and mentees may contact the Committee for guidance on any topic or issue that may arise during their participation in the program. The Committee will also provide guidance and support regarding the development of the relationship between the mentor and mentee and support with the cultivation of listening, advising, and coaching skills.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The Mentorship Program is responsible for all mentoring activities and assists in coordinating mentor assignments. The Committee will ensure that mentors focus on development. Mentors will help develop the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to enhance the mentees' careers.

Role of the Mentee

- Participate in all program activities by attending orientation, mentor/mentee meetings, and other scheduled events.
- Develop short and/or long-term goals at the onset of the mentor/mentee relationship.
- Accept feedback. Be patient and cooperative.

- Accept the program boundaries (i.e., the mentor is a career counselor, not an advocate).
- Use the program to enhance present career direction and identify future skills necessary for career growth.
- Accept responsibility for the mentor/mentee relationship by calling the mentor and initiating contact for meetings. The mentee is responsible for developing and fostering the mentoring relationship.

Role of the Mentor

- Serve as an unbiased confidant and counselor with whom the mentee may discuss work-related issues and other concerns perceived as impeding job performance.
- Provide objective and positive suggestions on appropriate office conduct and work ethics.
- Provide objective and positive suggestions on how the mentee may improve work proficiency and productivity.
- Participate in all program activities by attending orientation, mentor/mentee meetings, and other scheduled events. Participation is required unless the workload is negatively impacted.

Mentorship Program Guidelines

- All information discussed during mentorship sessions must remain confidential.
- Participation is voluntary.
- In order to remain in the program, both the mentor and mentee must participate in the process.
- Mentors and mentees in the program must attend one training session during the six-month program commitment hosted by the Committee.
- Participants must meet for at least a total of one hour per month during the six-month program commitment.

Number of Participants

There is no cap on the number of participants. Applicants who wish to choose their own mentee/mentor should write the name of that person on their application in the “Other Comments” section and encourage that person to apply. Both people must apply to be matched. The Committee will consider your preference but cannot guarantee a match.

Eligibility Requirements

Participating as a mentor or mentee is strictly voluntary; however, the following requirements must be met:

- Mentors and Mentees must be active members of NCAPA.
- Mentors must have at least five years of paralegal experience.

To Be A Successful Mentee, You Should:

- Be prepared to make a serious effort to set career goals and achieve them.
- Commit yourself to take the initiative to foster a positive relationship with your mentor.
- Listen to your mentor's suggestions, evaluate them and take appropriate action.
- Be prepared to commit time and effort to work toward your goals in addition to the official time for the Mentorship Program.

To Be A Successful Mentor, You Should:

- Be able to serve as a role model and resource to your mentee.
- Demonstrate proficiency and initiative in your own career.
- Commit to providing advice and guidance to the mentee on how to achieve his/her full potential.
- Demonstrate patience and cooperativeness when dealing with others.
- Be able to provide feedback on career and professional issues, which could impede a mentee's career development.
- Ask constructive questions.
- Be a good listener.
- Exhibit tact, diplomacy, and sensitivity in working with others from different age groups, backgrounds, or cultures.

Application Procedures

Interested mentors and mentees must apply to participate in the program through an application process. You must complete the respective application by the deadline as defined on the NCAPA website [here](#).

Related Documents

- [Mentor Application Form](#)
- [Mentee Application Form](#)
- [Mentorship Action Plan](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions](#)