



Law Society of Alberta  
**Mentor Connect**  
Program Information

## Program Overview

The purpose of *Mentor Connect* is to improve the professionalism and success of Alberta lawyers.

The program engages experienced counsel to guide those with less experience in realizing their career goals and achieving greater personal and professional balance in their lives.

Specifically, a successful mentoring relationship should help lawyers to:

- Develop practical skills.
- Discuss career management issues.
- Contribute to their sense of integrity.
- Increase their knowledge of legal customs.
- Obtain guidance and counsel on professional life as a lawyer.
- Encourage the use of best practices and highest ideals in the practice of law.

Mentees drive the conversations. They identify the issues they hope to address to improve their success and effectiveness.

For questions, comments or concerns, please feel free to contact the Practice Review Department at [practice.review@lawsociety.ab.ca](mailto:practice.review@lawsociety.ab.ca) or call us at 1-800-661-9003.

## How does the program work?

The program matches individual lawyers and mentors based on areas of law, geographical proximity and similar interests. Matching will be done by staff of the Practice Review Department.

The goal of Mentor Connect is to provide a valuable mentoring experience for mentors and mentees alike. We ask for an initial commitment of at least three months to decide if the relationship is working and what benefits you are gaining from it. If there is a problem or the chemistry is wrong, a new pairing may be the answer. If the relationship is working, the program continues a year. You are more than welcome to keep in touch and arrange additional meetings after that but there is no obligation to do so.

Through all of this, Practice Review staff will play a supporting role by:

- Maintaining a list of mentors who want to participate in the program.
- Matching mentors and mentees.
- Receiving confidential feedback from participants.
- Responding to any concerns or requests for accommodation that may arise during the program. All participants are encouraged to indicate any special needs or requirements on their registration form.
- Administering evaluation forms to mentors and mentees.
- Coordinating training of mentors.

## FAQs

### *How much time is involved?*

Aim for 3 - 5 hours a month at the start and go from there.

Plan for a certain number of contacts at the outset of the relationship but remain flexible. Your dealings with each other may be completely scheduled or they may be based on mutual convenience on short notice. The objective is to create a relationship that works for both of you. You should meet on a regular basis, at least once a month in the initial phase to develop a rapport and build trust.

You decide when and where that happens. You may prefer to have lunch or coffee together at the start of each month, meet weekly by Skype for 30 minutes, and have phone meetings in between. The key is to find a time and place that works for you.

### *I'd like to be a mentor but am I ready?*

Almost certainly you are. Having practiced for at least five years, you have gained hard-won experience and insight into how best to deal with clients, other lawyers and judges. You have developed office systems that work and may have seen others that don't. You know the importance of organization and developing a strategy, whether it involves running a trial, settlement negotiations or closing a deal. You enjoy practicing law without letting it be the only thing in your life. Your successes and failures have taught you lessons that might benefit others, and which you are willing to share.

### *I've been practicing for several years. How will I benefit from having a mentor?*

Your early training and exposure may have been to lawyers with poor practice management skills or who didn't share their experience with you when you were a junior. Maybe you've practiced in a firm with well-developed support systems and have recently broken away to set up your own shop. Or you are moving into a new practice area or simply moving to a new office setting. Having a mentor will help you recognize the hazards and let you learn from other people's mistakes as well as your own.

### *Does legal research play a part of the relationship?*

No. Mentors are not required nor are they expected to do legal research.

### *What about client confidentiality?*

The provisions of the Code of Professional Conduct will always apply. You should take care to avoid disclosing confidential information. Be aware of the potential for conflicts of interest. There is no solicitor-client privilege for communications between a mentor and a mentee.

### *Can we discuss situational matters as long as they remain hypothetical?*

Yes. It is important to remember that the relationship is intended to provide general information rather than answers to case-specific questions.

***What is the mentee's professional responsibility?***

The mentee is expected to make a professional evaluation of information received from the mentor and to provide client advice based solely on the mentee's own professional opinion, research and evaluation. This doesn't preclude a mentor from providing or suggesting a possible referral to the mentee – such as to the Office of the Practice Advisor or someone else knowledgeable in the field – but the mentor's role is not to act as a second counsel.

***How is a mentor assigned to a mentee?***

Factors used to match mentors with mentees include geography, personal interests, availability and professional experience. Mentors and mentees are also asked to identify any characteristics or special interests that would be important to them in the matching process.

***Who initiates the first contact?***

Practice Review staff will contact the mentor and mentee to arrange a mutually convenient time to meet at the Law Society's office. In some cases, other methods of contact such as telephone, Skype or video conferencing may be used but a face-to-face meeting is preferred. Other forms of contact like email or texting could be used once you develop a rapport. Practice Review staff will participate in the first meeting but that is all unless problems develop.

***Where does the discussion even begin?***

Develop a mentoring plan early on that lays out expectations and objectives. You should also review confidentiality issues as soon as possible. Confidential client information should never be discussed, and the mentor shouldn't be asked for or provide specific legal advice.

***What are some of the joint activities that might be appropriate?***

Consider attending CLE seminars, CBA sub-section meetings and other suitable law-related social events together. The mentor may introduce the mentee to members of the judiciary, court officials, staff and other lawyers, or invite the lawyer to sit in on court proceedings.

***What do I do if a personal issue arises that requires professional assistance?***

Mentors aren't expected to provide professional advice on personal matters, but those services are available through the ASSIST Program. The Practice Review Department also maintains contact information for other services available through the community and can assist with any referral that might be required.

***What are our disclosure obligations if our discussions reveal conduct deserving of sanction, a potential liability claim, safety issues or other concerns?***

Rules 2.03(3) and 6.01(3) in the Code of Conduct provide guidance on this matter. In addition, when in doubt, you are encouraged to contact the Office of the Practice Advisor at the Law Society of Alberta for confidential assistance.