

Frequently Asked Questions

Mentor Express Program

In 2020, the Benchers approved the [Lawyer Licensing and Competence in Alberta report](#). One recommendation from the report encourages all newly admitted lawyers to develop one or more mentoring relationships during their first year of practice.

To implement this recommendation, all new lawyers will be automatically enrolled in the Mentor Express program upon being called or being scheduled to be called to the bar in Alberta, starting in September 2021. While this participation in Mentor Express is not mandatory, all new lawyers are encouraged to participate. For those who choose not to participate, fill out [this form](#) to opt out of the program.

For more information on the future of lawyer licensing and competence in Alberta, read [this post](#).

For questions, comments, or concerns, please feel free to contact the Law Society's Mentorship Team at 1-800-661-9003 or mentorship@lawsociety.ab.ca.

Automatic Enrolment

1. Why is mentorship in the early years of a lawyer's career important?

Mentorship is beneficial for any new professionals starting their careers. With a wide range of practice settings and areas of law, this is particularly meaningful for lawyers.

As a new lawyer, mentoring relationships can encourage and empower your professional development, help you identify and achieve career goals, and increase your confidence. By engaging in a mentoring relationship, you can identify gaps in your knowledge or skills and address them early in your career.

Law school focuses on substantive law issues and the legal system, but practical knowledge such as how to run a practice, build a reputation and manage client relationships comes from experience. A mentoring relationship can help leverage the experience of others to develop key competencies and help you choose between the various career paths available to you.

2. How is mentorship being implemented for new lawyers in Alberta?

All new lawyers called or scheduled to be called to the bar will be automatically enrolled in Mentor Express for one program year, beginning in September 2021.

The intent is that this will facilitate and encourage a holistic, new-lawyer-centred approach to continuing personal and professional development during the critical first years of practice.

3. As a new lawyer, can I opt out of Mentor Express?

Yes, you may choose to opt out of the Mentor Express program, but we encourage you to build a mentoring relationship in another capacity, such as within your firm, organization or another mentoring program. Mentor Express is an excellent opportunity to meet with experienced lawyers in the profession and develop useful relationships early in your career.

As a new lawyer, we highly encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity.

4. How do I opt out of participation in Mentor Express?

Fill out [this form](#) to opt out of the program.

5. What is the Mentor Express program?

Mentor Express is a non-traditional mentorship program. It is like online shopping, except mentees are shopping to gain from mentors' experience and insight.

Mentees browse an online listing of mentors and choose one-hour sessions with mentors they are interested in meeting. The self-match system allows mentees to seek guidance and insight relevant to their own career development with a variety of mentors in different work settings.

To learn more about what participation in Mentor Express looks like as a mentor or mentee, visit [our website](#).

6. Who does automatic enrolment in Mentor Express apply to?

Automatic enrolment in Mentor Express applies to new Alberta lawyers called or scheduled to be called to the bar and entering their first year of practice. This does not apply to lawyers who are transferring to Alberta from another jurisdiction.

7. When does the Mentor Express program begin?

An expanded version of the Mentor Express program is launching in September 2021. In anticipation of this expanded launch, those participating in Mentor Express should be aware that the current program closes on August 31 rather than running until the end of 2021.

8. I was called to the Alberta bar earlier in 2021 as a new lawyer. Does automatic enrolment in Mentor Express apply to me?

Yes. Automatic enrolment is retroactive for the year 2021. If you were called to the bar after Jan. 1, 2021 or have your bar call scheduled in the coming months, you will be automatically enrolled in the initial launch of the program in September.

Once you are automatically enrolled in the program, you will receive a confirmation email from the Law Society detailing next steps and how to participate.

9. I will be called to the Alberta bar later in the year or in 2022. How will automatic enrolment apply to me?

The first year of the expanded Mentor Express program will run September 2021 – March 2022. New bar calls from Jan. 1 to July 31, 2021, or those with bar calls scheduled later in the coming months will be included in the initial launch of the program in September.

Bar calls scheduled following the launch will be automatically enrolled monthly to the current program. Shortly after your bar call is scheduled, you will receive a confirmation email from

the Law Society detailing next steps and how to participate.

Those called to the bar following Dec. 31, 2021, will be automatically enrolled for the September 2022 – March 2023 Mentor Express program. This gives mentees enough time and mentorship opportunities when they enter the program.

10. I have already participated in Mentor Express when I was an articling student. Can I participate again?

Yes. If you have already participated in Mentor Express, you will still be automatically enrolled upon your bar call.

11. I am not a new lawyer called to the Alberta bar. Can I still participate in Mentor Express as a mentee?

All Alberta lawyers and articling students are welcome to join the Mentor Express program as a mentee at any time. Visit [our website](#) to register as a mentee.

12. How long does the Mentor Express program run?

The Mentor Express program runs annually from September to March.

13. I am a participant in the current Mentor Express program. How can I continue into the expanded program come September?

Current mentors or mentees who want to participate in the new program in September may contact our Mentorship team [by email](#).

14. Are you recruiting new mentors to account for the increase in mentees in Mentor Express?

Yes, we need new mentors now more than ever. Given the influx of new mentees coming to the program, we need more mentors from all areas of practice and practice settings to volunteer their time.

As a mentor, you will meet with several new lawyers on a schedule that works for you. Mentors only need to commit to 10 one-hour sessions per year, providing flexibility for busy lawyers interested in giving back to the profession.

General

15. How does the Mentor Express program work?

The Mentor Express program facilitates one-time one-hour meetings between experienced lawyers as mentors and less-experienced lawyers or articling students as mentees. Each mentor meets with a cross section of mentees over the course of the year. Each mentee meets with multiple mentors.

16. How is this different from other mentoring programs that the Law Society offers?

The Law Society of Alberta has four distinct mentorship programs for its members. Since each program offers unique benefits to mentors and mentees, you can register for as many as your time permits.

In addition to Mentor Express, we offer:

- [Mentor Connect](#), which matches mentors and mentees for a traditional one-on-one mentoring relationship. The Law Society does the matching based on areas of practice, location, personal experience and similar interests. We ask for an initial commitment of at least three months, but if the relationship is working the program continues for six months.
- [Indigenous Law Mentorship Program](#), which matches Indigenous Alberta lawyers with Indigenous law students. It provides an opportunity for students to meet and connect with experienced Indigenous counsel. Students meet one-on-one with their mentor for advice, guidance and connections. Mentors and mentees are paired by Law Society staff based on similar interests and backgrounds.
- [AdvisorLink](#), which connects lawyers or articling students with volunteer lawyer advisors to answer one-off substantive law questions. Requests are made to the Law Society by phone or through an online form.

17. What does it cost to participate?

Mentors and mentees participate for free in Mentor Express.

18. Should I spread out my mentorship sessions or do them all at once?

One of the key features of this program is that scheduling is completely up to you. We recommend booking an average of one mentorship session every month or two. We advise against booking all mentorship sessions for a single day or week as this may not provide the best experience for you or your counterparts.

19. I am a member of the Law Society of Alberta but I live and work in another province. Can I still participate in Mentor Express?

Yes. There is nothing preventing you from participating in the program even though you practise and live elsewhere. This applies to both mentors and mentees.

20. How do I re-schedule a mentoring session with my mentor or mentee?

If anyone needs to re-schedule a meeting, they should contact their counterpart directly to make alternative arrangements.

21. Can I meet with my mentor or mentee again?

The goal of Mentor Express is to facilitate one-time meetings between multiple mentors and mentees. If both of you are willing, you are more than welcome to arrange additional

meetings, but within the program you are limited to only one meeting with each other.

22. Do I have to repeat the orientation if I participated in Mentor Express in previous years?

Yes. You need to repeat the orientation regardless of previous participation. This ensures you are up to date on any mentoring rule, policy or procedure changes.

23. What about client confidentiality?

The provisions of the Code of Conduct will always apply. 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.

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

Mentors may share information about mentees with the Law Society to provide them with additional support for their professionalism and conduct as a lawyer. Mentors are obligated to report serious ethical violations concerning a lawyer's violation of the Code of Professional Conduct that raise a substantial question about the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer. [Rules 3.03\(3\) to 3.03\(7\) and 7.01\(3\)](#) in the Code of Conduct provide guidance on this matter. When in doubt, you are encouraged to contact the [Office of the Practice Advisor](#) at the Law Society of Alberta for confidential assistance.

For Mentors

25. How do I participate as a mentor?

The provisions of the Code of Conduct will always apply. 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.

26. Do I qualify to be a mentor?

Mentors may share information about mentees with the Law Society to provide them with additional support for their professionalism and conduct as a lawyer. Mentors are obligated to report serious ethical violations concerning a lawyer's violation of the Code of Professional Conduct that raise a substantial question about the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness as a lawyer. [Rules 3.03\(3\) to 3.03\(7\) and 7.01\(3\)](#) in the Code of Conduct provide guidance on this matter. When in doubt, you are encouraged to contact the [Office of the Practice Advisor](#) at the Law Society of Alberta for confidential assistance.

27. How do I participate as a mentor?

Mentor Express is different from other mentoring programs that require mentors to devote significant amounts of time and energy to getting to know a single mentee. In Mentor

Express, a mentor's time commitment is limited to one-hour meetings spread over several months with multiple mentees. To sign up as a mentor:

- Complete an [online application](#) to serve as a mentor in Mentor Express.
- Once approved, fill out a short online profile about yourself with a photo and provide placeholders for dates when you would be available to meet mentees. We ask mentors to make themselves available for at least ten sessions.
- As part of your profile, you also choose specific tags to better describe the perspectives you can offer (personal attributes, discussion topics, geographical area).
- Mentees can book meetings with their preferred mentors on a first come, first served basis. They do this by going to the Mentor Express website and simply clicking on the meeting dates listed on mentors' profiles.
- Mentors can see who booked their sessions by logging in and viewing their "My Sessions" page.
- There are no assignments, tasks or deadlines. Conversations and topics are driven by the mentees.

28. Do I qualify to be a mentor?

If you have practised for at least **five years** and have never been suspended, disbarred from the practice of law or resigned in the face of discipline, by any law society or bar association in any jurisdiction, and have no formal disciplinary complaints pending, you can serve as a mentor in Mentor Express.

29. Can the five years come from a jurisdiction outside Alberta?

Yes. A mentor's years of experience in other provinces or jurisdictions (not just Alberta) count cumulatively toward the five-year requirement.

30. I qualify to be a mentor, but am I ready?

During your practice, 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 do not. You know the importance of organization and developing a strategy, whether it involves running a trial, settlement negotiations or closing a deal. You enjoy practising law without letting it be the only thing in your life.

Your successes and failures have taught you lessons that might benefit others if you are willing to share. You are ready.

31. Does legal research play a part of the relationship?

No. Mentors are neither required nor expected to do legal research.

32. 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 Law Society also maintains contact information for other services available through the community and can assist with any

referral that might be required.

For Mentees

33. How do I participate as a mentee?

Mentor Express offers a unique learning and relationship opportunity that you direct yourself. You match yourself with the mentors you want to meet. Unlike other programs that choose a mentor for you, the self-match system allows you to seek guidance and insight relevant to your own career development and interests. To sign up as a mentee:

- Complete an online application to participate as a mentee in Mentor Express.
- Once approved, the Law Society's Mentorship team will send you a link to access the Mentor Express platform.
- From there, you can visit the mentor gallery as often as you want to see who is available and the dates you might meet them. You are not restricted to mentors in your own city or town and can meet with any mentor listed.
- You can book meetings with your preferred mentors on a first come, first served basis. You do this by simply clicking on the meeting dates listed on mentors' profiles. *Note: You are limited to one session per mentor but can meet with up to four different mentors.*
- You can log in to your "My Sessions" page to see which mentor sessions were successfully booked and your mentors' contact information.
- **Mentees are responsible for contacting their mentors to confirm when and where they will meet and to make any changes if needed.**

34. I am a law student – can I participate?

In the future Mentor Express may be available to law students and National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) candidates, but for now it is limited to lawyers and articling students.

35. I've been practising for several years. How will I benefit from being a mentee at this stage?

Mentorship can benefit a lawyer at any stage of their career. Your early training and exposure may have been to lawyers with poor practice management skills or who did not share their experience with you when you were a junior. Maybe you have practised 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.

36. I would like to meet with a mentor living in another city. Do mentoring sessions have to be in-person?

No. While we recommend in-person mentorship sessions whenever possible, they aren't

always feasible, especially under the current circumstances of a global pandemic. Please let the Mentorship team at the Law Society know if you need help with video conference software or any other part of setting up a remote meeting.

37. As a mentee, what can I do if I'm interested in meeting with a specific mentor but they don't have any sessions available?

Participating mentors are asked to commit to up to ten mentorship sessions over a year. If the sessions of your preferred mentor(s) are filled, we ask you to respect their availability and seek other mentors.

38. As a mentee, can I use Mentor Express to ask substantive law questions?

No, Mentor Express is **not meant** for discussing substantive law issues or for getting advice about handling particular files. Mentorship is an excellent opportunity to ask questions about a wide variety of personal and professional development topics, including interpersonal communications, lawyer-client relationships, practice management, time management and much more.

If you have a substantive law question, please take advantage of [AdvisorLink](#), another program offered by the Law Society where volunteer lawyers can answer your one-off inquiries in a wide range of practice areas.

39. As a mentee, can I use Mentor Express to find a job?

No, Mentor Express is **not meant** for finding a job. Mentorship is an excellent opportunity to ask questions about a wide variety of personal and professional development topics, including interpersonal communications, lawyer-client relationships, practice management, time management and much more.

Mentees can discuss job search strategies, alternate career paths, resume building and interview skills, but should not ask mentors for a job or expect a mentor to help them look for one.

40. What is the mentee's professional responsibility?

Mentees should evaluate the information they receive from their mentors using their professional judgment and provide client advice based on their own professional opinion, research and evaluation. This does not preclude a mentor from providing or suggesting a possible referral to the mentee, but the mentor's role is not to act as a second counsel.

41. What should I talk about with my mentor?

Mentees, let your mentors know ahead of time what you would like to discuss with them. This lets them prepare better and gather any material they may want to share with you at your meeting. Develop a mentoring plan for yourself that lays out expectations and objectives. You should also review confidentiality issues as soon as possible. Confidential client information should never be discussed, and mentors should not be asked for or provide specific legal advi