

PREPARING FOR THE PRACTICE OF LAW

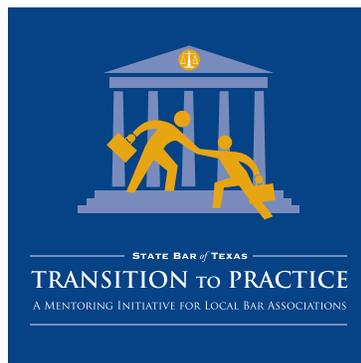
Lawyers who have been practicing for a few years not only face stiff competition, but also must grapple with a rapidly changing legal landscape as they navigate their life in the law.

As a profession, we need to connect with young lawyers as early in their careers as possible to ensure that they are prepared for the responsible practice of law and are committed to professionalism. Certainly we should support these lawyers by making available to them the tools they need to succeed. Yet we also need to impart to them the accumulated wisdom of experienced lawyers and help guide our profession's newest members to become better advocates for their clients and more engaged participants in the communities we serve.

Transition to Practice: A Mentoring Initiative for Local Bar Associations, based on a pilot project by the Dallas Bar Association, is intended to be easy to use, inexpensive, and readily adaptable to the needs of individual bar associations, law firms, or corporate or governmental law departments. The State Bar of Texas is grateful for the assistance of the Texas Young Lawyers Association in preparing and distributing this resource guide and indebted to the lawyers of Dallas who have proven that such a program can be successful.

Please join us in helping to provide our young lawyers a successful transition to the practice of law.

www.texasbar.com/transition



BACKGROUND

In 2007, the Dallas Bar Association launched a structured yearlong mentoring program as a pilot project for a potential statewide mentoring initiative. The DBA's volunteer program was designed to assist new lawyers as they transition from the "study of law" to the "practice of law" and to perpetuate the profession's highest standards of competence, professionalism, service, and collegiality.

Newly licensed lawyers are matched with more experienced attorneys who volunteer to participate in the project, and the pairs attend CLE programs and meet in small groups or one-on-one. The program coaches new lawyers in many areas, including law practice management, effective client representation, pro bono opportunities, career development, and other aspects of successfully practicing law.

Mentors are encouraged to make themselves available to the new lawyers with whom they are paired and to serve as a sounding board on issues commonly encountered by new practitioners. The program is well-suited to lawyers in large or small firms or the law departments of corporations or governmental entities. It is designed to assist lawyers in all areas of practice, from transactional attorneys to litigators. The program is intended to complement, not replace, the mentoring projects of large law firms and legal departments.

Transition programs have proven to be successful. In Georgia, roughly 60 percent of the new lawyers who participated in pilot project reported that they were "very satisfied" with their legal careers. Further, a survey showed that the legal skills the transition program had the greatest impact on were "the handling of ethical aspects of law practice and dealing with other lawyers."

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Transition to Practice is intended to provide local bar associations (or corporate or governmental law departments) with the resources they need to adapt, develop, and implement a mentoring program. The forms, timelines, and topics included in this resource guide are suggestions based on the feedback and results of the Dallas Bar Association's successful pilot project.

The program is designed to last 12 months, though certainly mentors and the new lawyers may choose to continue to meet and share experiences. The program is targeted to lawyers in their first several years of licensure, though each bar association can determine specific parameters for participation.

Every other month, a group meeting of all program participants takes place with programming planned around one or more specific mentoring topic. During alternate months, mentors and mentees will arrange to meet in small groups or one-on-one.

