



STATE BAR of TEXAS

TRANSITION TO PRACTICE

A MENTORING INITIATIVE FOR LOCAL BAR ASSOCIATIONS

“During times like these, the benefits of mentoring are invaluable. 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.”

– State Bar President Roland Johnson

State Bar Launches Mentoring Initiative

At the Bar Leaders Conference in July, State Bar President Roland Johnson introduced *Transition to Practice*, a mentoring initiative for local bar associations. Johnson, a shareholder in Harris, Finley & Bogle, P.C. in Fort Worth, is focusing during his term in office on preparing young lawyers for the practice of law. *Transition to Practice*, which is based on a successful pilot project by the Dallas Bar Association, is a structured, yearlong program that is designed to be easy to use, inexpensive, and readily adaptable to the needs of individual bar associations, law firms, or corporate or governmental law departments.

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

The State Bar has prepared a *Transition to Practice* resource guide that includes a proposed calendar, planning timeline, materials for recruiting and welcoming participants, mentoring agreement, program curriculum, evaluation form, and frequently asked questions. The forms, timelines, and topics in

the resource guide are suggestions based on the feedback and results of the Dallas Bar's pilot project.

The program is designed to last 12 months, although mentors and the new lawyers they are teamed up with may choose to continue to meet and share experiences. The program is targeted to lawyers in their first several years of licensure. Every other month, a group meeting of all program participants takes place with programming planned around a particular mentoring topic or topics. During alternate months, mentors and mentees arrange to meet one-on-one.

Mentors are encouraged to make themselves available to the new lawyers they are paired with and to serve as a sounding board on issues new practitioners frequently encounter. The program is suitable for lawyers in large or small firms or in the law departments of corporations or governmental entities. The program is intended to complement, not replace, the mentoring projects of large law firms and legal departments.

Transition programs in other states have proved to be successful. In Georgia, roughly 60 percent of the new lawyers who participated in the state's 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



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TRANSITION TO PRACTICE

practice and dealing with other lawyers.”

Johnson believes it is always challenging to make the transition from law school to practice, but it seems especially difficult during these changing times.

“New lawyers are entering perhaps the most challenging economic environment in my 30 years as a lawyer,” he said. “Those 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. During times like these, the benefits of mentoring are invaluable. 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.”

Justice Douglas Lang of the 5th District Court of Appeals in Dallas was instrumental in planning the Dallas Bar Association

pilot project that *Transition to Practice* is based on. During the Bar Leaders Conference, Lang led a workshop on the nuts-and-bolts of putting together a successful mentoring program that was attended by more than 100 representatives of local and specialty bar associations and young lawyer affiliates across the state. Several bar associations have announced plans to implement *Transition to Practice*.

Lang described the initiative as a virtual “paint by numbers” set. “Here it is, take it, and make it into what you need!” he said. “Together, we will improve our profession.”

Johnson said the State Bar is committed to helping the profession’s newest members become better advocates for their clients and more engaged participants in the communities they serve.

For more information on *Transition to Practice*, visit www.texasbar.com/transition. 🌐

PROPOSED CALENDAR

Every other month, all of the lawyers who are participating in your bar association’s *Transition to Practice* program will meet as a group for a CLE presentation on one or more specific mentoring topics. Your local bar will determine the group program dates. During alternate months, mentors and the mentees they have been matched with will arrange to meet one-on-one.

January

5:30 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Topics: *Introduction to the Transition to Law Practice Program* and *Attaining Success and Maintaining Integrity for the Beginning Lawyer*

March

Noon – 1 p.m.

Topics: *Everything the Beginning Lawyer Needs to Know About Dealing With Clients (Selecting, Attracting, Maintaining, and Firing Them)* and *The Generation Gap: Communicating with Non-Gen-Xer Clients and Lawyers*

May

Noon – 1 p.m.

Topic: *Satisfaction, Fulfillment, Wellness, and Happiness for the Beginning Lawyer*

July

Noon – 1 p.m.

Topic: *Malpractice Traps for the Beginning Lawyer*

September

Noon – 1 p.m.

Topic: *Indispensable Legal Writing Instruction for the Beginning Lawyer*

November

Noon – 1 p.m.

Topics: *The Beginning Lawyer’s Opportunities in and Responsibilities to the World Beyond the Office* and *Transition Wrap-up*

PROGRAM CURRICULUM

The *Transition to Practice* program materials include a sample curriculum for each of the group programs as well as links to resources bar associations or legal departments can consider.

1. First Presentation (January) — *Introduction to Transition to Practice* and *Attaining Success and Maintaining Integrity for the Beginning Lawyer*
 - a. Orientation to the Transition to Practice Program
 - i. Discussion of its goals and purposes
 - ii. Review the program’s schedule and six presentations
 - iii. Discuss the crucial mentoring component and its importance
 - iv. Discuss commitment expected from all Transition to Practice participants
 - v. Matching of mentors with participants (the individuals will meet one another at the end of the presentation)
 - b. 10 Tips for Being a Great Mentor
 - c. Breakout discussion

Resources

Dallas Bar Association, Transition to Law Practice
www.dallasbar.org/tlpp (click on “Training Materials”)

ABA Young Lawyers Division/StoryCorps Mentorship Project
www.abanet.org/mentoring

Texas Young Lawyers Association, Ten Minute Mentor
www.tenminutementor.com

To order copies of the *Transition to Practice* resource materials, contact:

State Bar of Texas Local Bar Services
P.O. Box 12487, Austin, TX 78711-2487
(800) 204-2222, Ext. 1517
www.texasbar.com/transition