



Mentoring Plan Template for For Attorneys “Hanging a Shingle”

NOTE: If you wish to delete activities or to add activities not listed, simply confirm with CAMP or with your Sponsoring Program facilitator, especially if you plan to apply for CLE Credit Certification.

1. Initial Planning Meeting, Personal and Professional Development (complete all)

Action	Mark completed items
Meet to prepare the customized mentoring plan based on the Mentee’s needs and interests. Discuss best communication methods for each attorney, and consider scheduling all remaining meetings/activities for the mentoring term.	
In tailoring the mentoring plan to the Mentee’s interests, discuss long-term career goals and identify ways to achieve them.	
The mentor should introduce the Mentee to the firm’s attorneys and staff (if not already done).	
Include in the meeting professional identity discussion, including discussion about inclusiveness and diversity, work-life balance, mental health and substance abuse issues facing lawyers, and the services available to attorneys regarding these health issues.	

2. The Colorado Bar and Legal Community (complete at least one)

Action	Mark completed items
Mentor and mentee attend a “Solo/Small Firm” bar association section meeting or other attorney networking event for lawyer entrepreneurs. Introduce the Mentee to other attorneys in attendance. Discuss the advantages of bar association involvement and discuss the many local, state, and national associations available to solo attorneys and legal entrepreneurs.	
Attend Trust Account School offered by the Office of Attorney Regulation Counsel.	
Attend “Hanging Your Own Shingle” course offered by CBA/CLE.	

3. History and Importance of Legal Entrepreneurship

Action	Mark completed items
Meet together to discuss the rise of legal entrepreneurship in the last decade.	
Discuss specifically how solo and small law firm practice fits in to the overall legal profession and the importance of said field.	

4. Colorado Rules of Professional Conduct, Professionalism, and Civility

Action	Mark completed items
Required (to be completed with the activity elected from list below)	
The pair should discuss the distinction between the Colorado RPC and professionalism; the attorney’s obligations to the court, the client, and opposing counsel; common ethical issues and resources for how to resolve difficult ethical questions; common grievance and malpractice “traps” and how to avoid them; the benefits of carrying malpractice insurance and the ramifications for failing to do so.	
Complete at least one of the following:	
Discuss how to screen for, recognize, and avoid conflicts of interest, especially in regards to repeat clients.	
Discuss the responsibilities of the client and the lawyer in decision-making, the best ways to involve a client in their case. Discuss client communications generally, e.g., how to say no to a client, billing issues, etc.	
Discuss how to prepare for negotiation of a legal matter, when and how negotiation is initiated, how to involve the client, ethical and professionalism obligations of negotiators, skills needed to be an effective negotiator and how to acquire them.	
Discuss appropriate ways to handle situations where a lawyer believes another lawyer has committed an ethical violation or otherwise acted unprofessionally or uncivilly; the obligation to report misconduct; and the appropriate way to handle a situation where the Mentee is asked by a senior member of the firm/organization to do something that is unethical or unprofessional.	
Discuss the grievance process and a lawyer’s duty to cooperate with a disciplinary investigation.	
Discuss client development and marketing, appropriate procedures and ethical implications.	

5. Law Practice Start-Up (complete at least two)

Action	Mark completed items
FINANCE: As with any business, there is an initial cost to starting up your practice. Many practices start off on a shoestring budget and make more substantive investments once the cash begins to flow in. But, you will need some cash or credit initially for the essentials, like malpractice insurance. Make a list of the essentials versus non-essentials and the costs associated. Use that information to construct a budget – include initial and monthly costs through your first year. Thus, you’ll know what funds you need upfront and how much you need to make over the course of the year to cover expenses (and profit). Accompanying your budget should be revenue projections for the year. This may seem difficult upfront, but necessary to set goals for your practice and be realistic about expectations.	

MARKETING: You can no longer merely “hang a shingle” and expect clients to walk through your door. As competition increases and more and more prospective clients look to the Internet for answers to their legal problems, you need to have your pulse on new marketing strategies. Especially when starting out, you should have a marketing plan or platform to inform where and how you will market to prospective clients and referral sources. At the outset, focus on what you know and what you’re good at, but make sure to include some variety and continue to redefine your plan based on legal trends and analytics (what’s working, what’s not).	
OPERATIONS: When opening your own practice, you should understand that to run a profitable and sustainable practice, you must run it like a business. As such, you’ll need to establish operational procedures and pay attention to administration in order to ensure a smooth ride. Operations include maintenance of your office space (whether home, virtual, or office), organization of your file system, opening new matters, communicating with clients, and setting policies for streamlined administration.	
RISK MANAGEMENT: No law firm or attorney is immune to suit for malpractice or complaint, the loss of data, or an unexpected emergency. By building risk management strategies into your new business, you can drastically minimize the impact of any of these unfortunate situations.	
TECHNOLOGY: Technology is no longer the “future” of law practice, it is the present. Leveraging technology in your practice can provide huge benefits, including increasing productivity, efficiency, and minimizing malpractice risk. While there is no right answer as to the specific technology you should purchase, consider for the basic technology that you need in a modern law office and best practices to ensure that you protect yourself and your clients.	

6. Law Office Management and In-Office Procedures

Action	Mark completed items
Required (to be completed with the activity(s) elected from list above)	
<p>Discuss law office management best practices (preferably including a tour of the mentor’s office), and the importance of maintaining organized procedures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time records. • Records of client-related expenses. • Billing system. • Client retainer and/or payment schedules, types of fee agreements. • Escrow and trust account, establishing a COLTAF, accounting, auditing, use of interest proceeds, proper procedures for handling client funds and other property. • Filing system and procedures. • Document retention plan. • Calendar reminder systems. • Information technology systems. • Library and research systems. • Other resources (publications, seminars, equipment). 	

<p>Discuss law office financial best practices including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start-up costs • Budget & financial planning for the first year • Projecting revenue for law firms • Law firm profitability • Fee Structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Retainer ○ Flat Fee ○ Contingency Fee ○ Unbundled Services • Billing & collections procedures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How to take credit card payments ○ Invoice/bill drafting ○ Collecting unpaid fees ○ Third party payors • Setting up a trust account <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ COLTAF Accounting ○ When to transfer funds from your trust account ○ Ethical considerations and rules 	
<p>Discuss law office marketing best practices including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law firm branding • Personal branding • Business card optimization • Networking 101 • Website building block • Search engine optimization • Blogging • Social Media • Email Marketing • Ethical considerations in lawyer advertising 	
<p>Discuss law office risk management best practices including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starting a small business • Developing a business plan • Entity selection • Taking on partners • Tax implications • Selecting a malpractice insurance provider • Choosing malpractice coverage options • Succession planning • Data security • Cloud storage • Physical document retention and storage • Backup technology systems 	
Complete at least one of the following:	
<p>Discuss role and responsibilities of paralegals, secretaries and other office personnel, and how to establish good working relationships with others in the same office who are support staff or colleagues (i.e. in an office sharing situation).</p>	
<p>Discuss practices to maintain client confidentiality.</p>	
<p>Discuss how to prevent issues of unauthorized practice of law with staff.</p>	

Discuss office politics, including appropriate networking, socializing, and personal behaviors.	
Succession Planning: Discuss the importance of planning ahead for handling the practice in the event of retirement, disability, or death.	
Discuss the issues surrounding wrapping up a solo firm, such as how to protect oneself, advising clients, and withdrawing from cases.	
Discuss the benefits/issues with a collaborative law practice and co-working space.	

7. Working With Clients (Complete at least one)

Action	Mark completed items
Discuss importance of client communication, how to maintain appropriate ongoing communication (returning telephone calls, email) to keep clients informed, including use of fee agreements, timeliness, written communication, etc. Discuss how to deal with a “difficult” client. Discuss dealing with clients with respect to the business aspects of the relationship, including billing and other business procedures.	
Discuss proper legal counseling, including the duties and responsibilities of advising clients and the respective responsibilities of the client and the lawyer in decision-making. Discuss how to deal with a “difficult” client.	
Discuss the initial meeting and interaction with a potential client, tips for gathering information about a legal matter, appraising the credibility and trust of the potential client, evaluating whether to accept the representation, how to decline representation. Discuss making and accepting referrals.	
Discuss the termination of the attorney-client relationship, issues with terminating mid-representation, necessary steps and documentation.	

8. Public Service (Complete at least one)

Action	Mark completed items
Get acquainted with legal aid programs, local pro bono programs, and other opportunities for engaging in pro bono activities and civic and charitable work. Discuss the reasons for making time to engage in volunteer legal service to the public and any impediments to undertaking such work.	
Mentee attends a civic club of which the mentor is a member or some other community service activity in which the mentor participates. Discuss the reasons for making time to engage in volunteer legal service to the public.	
The pair participates in a bar-sponsored or other volunteer program aimed at delivering legal services to the public. Discuss the reasons for making time to engage in volunteer legal service to the public.	
Discuss opportunities as a sole practitioner to engage modest means clients in an effort to advance access to justice in Colorado.	