

Frequently Asked Questions

Mentor Express Program

Unlike traditional mentoring in which mentees are assigned a single mentor who they get to know over an extended period of time, in Mentor Express mentees get to meet multiple mentors and get to choose for themselves who they meet with. This self-match system lets them seek guidance and insight relevant to their own career development from mentors they are most interested in speaking with.

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.*
- *Improve leadership bench strength within their law firms, corporate legal departments, institutions (such as universities), Not-For-Profit organizations and the profession.*

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.

1. How does this 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.

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

The Law Society of Alberta has three distinct mentorship programs for its members. You can choose to participate in whichever one appeals to you the most or sign up for all of them if you want. Since each program offers unique benefits to mentors and mentees alike, 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 law, 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 a year.

- **AdvisorLink**, which connects lawyers or articling students with more experienced lawyers to answer one-off substantive law questions. Requests are made to the Law Society by phone or through an online form.

3. 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.

4. Do I qualify to be a mentor?

If you have practised for at least **five years**, have never been disbarred from the practice of law in any province or other jurisdiction, and have no formal disciplinary complaints pending, you can serve as a mentor in Mentor Express.

5. 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 towards the five-year requirement.

6. What does it cost?

Mentors and mentees participate for free in Mentor Express.

7. 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.

8. 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, you 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 during the calendar year of the program.

- As part of your profile, you also choose specific tags to better describe the perspectives you can offer (practice areas, interests, experiences).
- 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.

9. 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.

10. 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 six 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.**

11. 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.

12. I have 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.

13. 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, they are not 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.

14. As a mentee, what can I do if I am interested in meeting with a specific mentor, but they do not 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.

15. 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.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. 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.

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

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

20. Can we discuss substantive law questions?

No. The purpose of Mentor Express is to help new lawyers become the lawyer they would like to be and to gain insight into career management, work-life balance and dealing with clients, judges and counsel. It is not to discuss substantive law questions or develop plans for your files. For that, mentees are urged to use the Law Society's [AdvisorLink](#) service.

21. 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.

22. What should I talk about with my mentor(s)?

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 advice.

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

Mentors are not 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 the Mentorship Team assist with any referral that might be required.

24. 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. When in doubt, you are encouraged to contact the [Office of the Practice Advisor](#) at the Law Society of Alberta for confidential assistance.