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Message from the President

Connie Akridge, Esq., State Bar of Nevada President



TRANSITIONING INTO PRACTICE (TIP) IS HERE!

“...the TIP experience may be customized to the mentee’s particular practice setting and practice areas, by the mentee’s selection of program modules from a wide selection of available elective modules.”

The Nevada Supreme Court recently granted the Board of Governor’s request to approve a mentoring program for newly admitted attorneys on a pilot basis and to temporarily suspend the Bridge the Gap requirement. The mentoring program, known as Transitioning into Practice (TIP), requires newly admitted attorneys to work through a curriculum under the guidance of an assigned experienced attorney (the mentor) over a six-month time period.

While certain components of the curriculum must be completed by every newly admitted attorney (mentee), the TIP experience may be customized to the mentee’s particular practice setting and practice areas, by the mentee’s selection of program modules from a wide selection of available elective modules. The core curriculum generally covers:

- (i) the Nevada legal community;
- (ii) personal and professional development and ethics;
- (iii) law office management and the practice of law; and
- (iv) client communications, advocacy and negotiation.

The TIP program is designed, not to replace, but to dovetail with existing mentoring programs already in place at law firms, in corporate legal departments or in governmental units.

Mentors will introduce new attorneys to the importance of maintaining high standards of integrity, professional conduct, professional competence and service to the public. Mentors will particularly emphasize every attorney’s obligation to provide pro bono legal services to those unable to afford the services of an attorney.

The goals of the TIP program are to:

- Assist new lawyers in acquiring the practical skills and judgment necessary to practice in a highly competent manner;
- Train new lawyers regarding Nevada-specific rules and procedures not specifically taught in traditional learning environments;
- Sharpen and enhance practical skills necessary to compete in today’s legal environment;
- Match new lawyers with experienced lawyers for training in professionalism, ethics and civility;
- Provide support, foster relationships and create networking opportunities for newly admitted members; and

- Provide a means for all Nevada attorneys to learn the importance of organizational mentoring, including the building of developmental networks and long-term mentoring relationships.

On August 22, 2011 the Board of Governors filed an ADKT petition (ADKT 0464) with the Nevada Supreme Court to establish the TIP program. The ADKT petition requested amending SCR 214 to eliminate the requirement under SCR 210 that newly admitted attorneys take the Introduction to Nevada Practice and Procedure (commonly referred to as Bridge the Gap), instead requiring that they satisfy the requirements of the TIP program.

The Bridge the Gap program is a continuing legal education program that covers a variety of topics about the practice of law in Nevada. The ADKT petition also requested that the court amend SCR 98 to establish a mandatory mentoring program, and SCR 121.1 to allow the State Bar of Nevada (SBN) to suspend an attorney's license for noncompliance with the TIP requirement.

Upon completion of TIP, the mentor and mentee must submit to the SBN a signed affidavit of completion. Those not completing the TIP requirement will be subject to suspension and a \$250 fine.

Special thanks to Chief Justice Nancy Saitta, chair of the Professionalism Summit Committee, for her leadership in making the pilot program a reality. She and the members of the Professionalism Summit Committee including Dara Goldsmith, Gregg Kamer, Shea Backus, Larry Digesti, Ruth Miller, Elliott Sattler, Paola Armeni, Judge David Hardy, Ryan Bellows and Tom Kummer spent many hours over the last year devising, reviewing and revising the policies and procedures for the TIP program. I also want to thank SBN Executive Director Kim Farmer and her staff including Stephanie Hirsch, Lisa McGrane, Emily Ackerberg and Darnell Lynch for their efforts in drafting the policies and procedures for the program and keeping us all on track. Thanks also to members of the Nevada Supreme Court and the Board of Governors for giving this innovative program a chance.

TIP is modeled after similar successful mentoring programs in Georgia, New Mexico, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Wyoming. Bar association representatives in these states indicate that mentors report that service as mentor is a fun and professionally enriching experience. To be a mentor, an attorney must be in good standing with the State Bar of Nevada, have practiced in Nevada for at least seven years, be approved by the Board of Governors and appointed by the Nevada Supreme Court. Mentors will be required to complete a training program. Please go online at www.nvbar.org if you are interested in becoming a mentor or if you wish to learn more about TIP. ■