

Bar News

We Are Better Together: How Mentorship Can Shape a New Attorney's Career

By Karen Mills

The Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program, administered by the DuPage County Bar Association (“DCBA”), provides a bridge for new attorneys between law school graduation and entry into life as a practicing attorney. Navigating one’s early career path can be a daunting experience. With the help of a seasoned mentor, mentees are given one-on-one guidance as they build their confidence and establish professional connections within their local community.

The DCBA launched the program in January of 2012 in an effort to equip emerging attorneys in DuPage County with real-world application of the concepts they learned in law school and facilitate for them a network of continued support. In order to be considered for the program, mentees must be in their first five years of practice in Illinois, submit a Mentoring Agreement, and participate in an orientation session. Each mentee is then paired with an attorney through their local sponsoring organization. The program takes place over the course of a year, during which mentors regularly meet with their mentees.

When Abid Sabzali made the decision to pivot from his career as a comptroller to his current career as an attorney, he knew he could benefit from the resources offered to new lawyers by the DCBA. He recalled that what drew him to the Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program specifically was “the ability to work with an experienced attorney about any issues that come up like billing or how to interact with difficult clients.” He received his law degree from Northern Illinois University College of Law and also holds a Master of Science Degree in Taxation from Northern Illinois University. Abid currently focuses his practice on business services, trusts and estates, wealth transfer, and estate planning at Huck Bouma, PC.

I have had great pleasure in serving as Abid’s mentor. My practice concentrates on estate planning, trust and estate

administration, probate litigation, special-needs planning, and guardianships for minors and disabled adults. Abid's and my shared passion for trusts and estates have made for a rewarding partnership, which began in August of 2022.

During his mentorship, Abid has tackled several attorney "firsts." Abid accompanied me to the DuPage County Courthouse for the first time, where he was able to observe proceedings in front of Judge Richard Felice. "We went in for a post-alimony decree, which was a completely new environment for me." Abid recounts that prior to his mentorship, his primary references for a courtroom were the dramatic scenes portrayed on television. He was eager to learn "...how judges interact with the plaintiff and defendant and how attorneys conduct themselves in court."

Abid and I have also had the opportunity to attend lunch with Judge Robert Gibson. Abid was appreciative of how informative and insightful their afternoon together was. "I've always wanted to talk to a judge about their career and I felt like I could really speak freely." Abid expressed how generous Judge Gibson was to dedicate his time to a young attorney.

As an active member of the DCBA as well as its current Second Vice President, I have involved Abid in many of the networking opportunities hosted by the association each year. Abid joined me and other attorneys from my office at the 2022 Grand Holiday Gala, as well as this year's celebration of "Judges' Nite." "Karen has taken initiative as my mentor to set up meetings and activities – she does a lot of the leg work," Abid said.

It has been very gratifying to witness Abid's professional growth during our time together. He asks such insightful questions. Personally, it has been very rewarding to pay it forward



Abid Sabzali, Judge Robert Gibson, Karen Mills

with such an eager learner like Abid. He embodies what we hope for in our mentee participants.

DCBA President Angel Traub designated the phrase "No One Stands Alone" as the theme of her current term. The Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program acts as a shining embodiment of this sentiment, and this story is just one example of how impactful fellowship and advocacy can be to our new attorneys in DuPage County. □

About the Author



Karen Mills concentrates on estate planning, trust and estate administration, probate litigation, special-needs planning, and guardianships at Aronberg Goldgehn's Wheaton office. Karen graduated from Northern Illinois University, J.D., in 2012 and Aurora University, BA., Business Administration, in 2007. She currently serves as the DCBA's Second Vice President.