

Mentoring Plan for Underrepresented Lawyers



Revised May 2026

How to Use This Plan

This curriculum guides mentor-mentee pairs through ten topic areas tailored to the specific challenges and opportunities facing underrepresented lawyers. Check ☐ in the right column as each item is completed. Items marked **REQUIRED** must be completed; for others, complete the minimum number specified. All hyperlinked resources are preserved and clickable.

1. INITIAL PLANNING MEETING, PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT (COMPLETE ALL)

Action	Mark Completed
Schedule an initial meeting — in person where practical, or virtually — to prepare a customized mentoring plan. Use the CAMP Initial Goal Plan & Meeting Guide to develop goals for the mentoring relationship.	☐
Discuss best communication methods for each participant and consider scheduling all remaining meetings and activities for the mentoring term.	☐
In tailoring the plan to Mentee’s interests, discuss long-term professional and career goals and identify ways to achieve them — with particular attention to how Mentee’s identity and background shape those aspirations and the paths available to them.	☐
Mentor should introduce Mentee to the office’s attorneys and staff (if not already done) where practical, including attorneys from underrepresented groups who may serve as additional informal mentors or role models.	☐
Include a day-in-the-life discussion: work-life integration, mental health and substance use issues facing lawyers — including the additional stressors faced by underrepresented attorneys — and the services available to attorneys regarding these health issues.	☐
Build rapport using the following five-step framework: 1. Shift your mindset to “I am worthy of mentoring.” 2. Look for indicators of shared humanity with your mentoring partner. 3. Identify one thing you can appreciate about your mentoring partner. 4. Listen to understand — not just to respond.	☐

Action	Mark Completed
5. Be open, not transactional.	
Discuss communication norms for the mentoring relationship: • Preferred platforms (email, text, video call, in-person). • Response-time expectations and after-hours boundaries. • How to handle cancellations and rescheduling. • Confidentiality expectations within the mentoring relationship — including how to handle disclosures of discrimination or workplace difficulties.	☐

2. THE COLORADO BAR AND LEGAL COMMUNITY (COMPLETE AT LEAST ONE)

Action	Mark Completed
Attend a meeting of an organized bar association or attorney networking event together — including an affinity bar association, in person or virtually. Introduce Mentee to other attorneys in attendance. Discuss the advantages of bar association involvement and the many local, state, and national associations available, including practice-area-specific and identity-specific associations: • CBA's Specialty and Diversity Bar Associations • Colorado Hispanic Bar Association, Sam Cary Bar Association (Black attorneys), Colorado LGBT Bar Association, Colorado Asian Pacific American Bar Association, National Bar Association chapters, and others. • Discuss how affinity bar associations provide community, mentorship, advocacy, and career resources that are particularly valuable for underrepresented attorneys. • Discuss the strategic value of membership in both affinity and non-affinity associations for network diversity and professional visibility.	☐
Visit the local courthouse(s), particularly those where Mentee may appear. Make introductions to members of the judiciary, court personnel, and clerks of court. Discuss customary rules of civility and etiquette in court and among lawyers and judges in the community. • Discuss how courthouse relationships can look different for underrepresented attorneys — and strategies for building authentic, lasting connections regardless of identity. • Discuss judges and court staff from underrepresented backgrounds and how their presence on the bench and in courts matters.	☐
Attend a Term Day or similar gathering of local judges and attorneys. Discuss how these events foster community in the bar and how Mentee can get involved — including which events tend to be most welcoming and diverse.	☐
Discuss online and virtual community-building for underrepresented attorneys:	☐

Action	Mark Completed
• LinkedIn presence and how to signal identity-based expertise and community involvement. • National online communities for underrepresented lawyers: LinkedIn groups, Slack communities, and identity-specific attorney networks. • How to use social media to build a professional brand while managing the unique risks underrepresented attorneys face online.	

3. DEVELOPING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY & LAWYER WELL-BEING (COMPLETE AT LEAST TWO)

Action	Mark Completed
Professional Identity Formation: Help Mentee articulate their “Professional Identity” as a lawyer — one that fully incorporates their background, community, and lived experience, not one that requires minimizing or concealing who they are. Use John Bliss’ The Professional Identity Formation of Lawyers to facilitate discussion. Explore: • Why did Mentee choose the profession of law, and what do they seek to accomplish? • How does Mentee define “professional success” — and whose input shaped that definition? Whose voices were absent from that definition, and should be included? • What characteristics, skills, and attributes will enable Mentee’s success? • Who in Mentee’s personal and professional community will support them? • How has Mentee’s identity — race, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religion, national origin, or other dimension — shaped why and how they chose law and what they hope to accomplish?	☐
Well-Being Assessment: Engage Mentee in a self-reflective exercise on the six dimensions of well-being. Use the ABA Well-Being Toolkit for Lawyers and Legal Employers to build an action plan addressing self-identified gaps: • Emotional: Recognize and manage emotions; seek mental health support when needed. Note that racial trauma, microaggressions, and stereotype threat can significantly impact emotional well-being. • Occupational: Cultivate satisfaction, growth, and financial stability — noting that underrepresented attorneys often face structural barriers to advancement that require intentional navigation. • Intellectual: Pursue continuous learning and creative challenges. • Spiritual: Develop a sense of meaning and purpose. • Social: Build connection and belonging — including within professional communities where underrepresented lawyers may feel isolated or unwelcome. • Physical: Maintain activity, nutrition, sleep; minimize harmful substance use.	☐

Action	Mark Completed
Resilience Planning: Engage Mentee in a reflection on resilience — including resilience in the face of discrimination, microaggressions, and systemic barriers specific to underrepresented attorneys. Consider: • Three Ways Lawyers Can Become More Resilient • Survival Skill No. 1 for Lawyers: Emotional Resilience • Discuss the difference between individual resilience and systemic change — resilience is a tool for survival, not a substitute for addressing inequity.	☐
Defining Professional & Personal “Success” on Your Own Terms: Work with Mentee to build a sustainable, fulfilling definition of success that is not filtered through others’ expectations or traditional paradigms that may not have been designed with Mentee in mind. • Traditional concepts of success (wealth, power, independence) and how they apply — or don’t — to underrepresented attorneys navigating structural barriers to those traditional markers. • Unconventional paths: those who followed purpose-driven routes and found ultimate satisfaction in the work itself. • Finding your definition: picture yourself with all time and resources — what would you do? How would you find satisfaction? • Build 2–3 primary goals from that foundation. Your definition of success also dictates your definition of failure — you’ve only failed if you’ve given up.	☐
Assessment of Current Professional Identity: Ask Mentee to answer “What do you do?” Work together to expand the answer to include a broader view of Mentee’s strengths, interests, and professional passions. Specifically explore: • How Mentee’s identity and community experience are professional assets, not limitations. • Whether Mentee feels they can bring their full self to work — and if not, what the cost of that is and what can be done about it.	☐
Navigating Code-Switching and Authenticity: Discuss the professional and personal costs of code-switching and the ongoing tension between authenticity and conformity in the legal profession: • What aspects of their identity has Mentee felt pressure to minimize or conceal in professional settings? • What is the psychological and professional cost of that pressure, and how does it affect well-being and career satisfaction? • Discuss strategies for maintaining authenticity while navigating professional environments that may not fully welcome all dimensions of Mentee’s identity. • How is the profession changing, and how can Mentee be part of shaping a more inclusive professional culture?	☐

4. BUILDING A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Action	Mark Completed
Discuss how to develop networks early in Mentee’s career. Find points of entry to target, and discuss how building a network can help underrepresented attorneys become “stars” at work — creating the visibility and relationships that drive opportunity and advancement. • Discuss the specific networking barriers underrepresented attorneys often face: exclusion from informal networks, after-hours socializing that may feel unwelcoming, and the “help seeker” stigma. • Develop an intentional networking strategy: identify three to five target connections and a plan for building each relationship. • Discuss how to follow up after meeting someone: the email, the coffee, the consistent contact that turns an introduction into a relationship.	☐
Facilitate a discussion with other underrepresented attorneys to share successes and challenges in professional community building. Discuss: • What strategies have worked for building networks across identity lines? • What has surprised Mentee about who has been a supporter or ally? • How to create reciprocal relationships where Mentee is both supported and supports others.	☐
Read the ABA’s article, The Value of Networking for Diverse Attorneys, and discuss the importance of having a diverse network as both a new and seasoned attorney. • Discuss the research finding that diverse networks — not just identity-specific ones — are associated with greater career advancement and resilience. • Identify gaps in Mentee’s current network and make a plan to address them.	☐
Discuss the value of “Sponsorship” in career progression for underrepresented lawyers and how to identify and utilize a sponsor to achieve professional growth: • The distinction between a mentor (who advises) and a sponsor (who advocates): sponsors use their political capital to open doors for sponsored attorneys. • How to identify potential sponsors — people with power, credibility, and a track record of supporting underrepresented attorneys. • How to position yourself to be sponsored: delivering excellent work, building visibility, and making it easy for sponsors to advocate for you. • How Mentor can serve as a sponsor, not just a mentor, for Mentee. • Discuss how underrepresented attorneys often have less access to sponsorship and why closing that gap is essential to career advancement.	☐
Discuss the importance of developing group-specific networks outside of a place of employment:	☐

Action	Mark Completed
• Affinity organizations: Colorado affinity bars, national identity-based bar associations, law school affinity alumni groups, and community organizations. • Non-affinity organizations: Practice-area associations, civic organizations, and professional groups where Mentee can build cross-identity relationships and expand their sphere of influence. • Discuss the value of being a visible, contributing member of both affinity and non-affinity communities for long-term career sustainability.	
Discuss AI and technology tools for professional networking and visibility building: • How to use LinkedIn effectively: profile optimization, engagement strategies, and content creation. • How to leverage virtual platforms for networking without the geographic or social constraints of in-person events. • Online communities and platforms specifically for underrepresented attorneys.	☐

5. COLORADO RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT, PROFESSIONALISM, AND CIVILITY

Action	Mark Completed
REQUIRED (complete with at least one activity from the list below)	
Core Ethics Discussion (Required): The pair should discuss: • The distinction between the Colorado RPC and general professionalism. • Attorney obligations to the court, client, and opposing counsel. • Common ethical issues and resources for resolving them. • Common grievance and malpractice “traps” and how to avoid them. • The benefits of malpractice insurance and the consequences of going without it. • Technology competency obligations under RPC 1.1, Comment [8], including AI tools.	☐
Dealing with Toxicity & Bullying: Engage Mentee in a reflection on bullying and toxic behavior in the legal profession — including forms of discrimination, microaggressions, and hostile behavior that underrepresented attorneys disproportionately experience. Develop a personal plan for avoiding and responding to such conduct. See: Dealing with Lawyer Bullies • Discuss how to distinguish microaggressions from outright discrimination, and how to respond strategically to each. • Develop a personal plan: when to address conduct directly, when to escalate, and when to document.	☐

Action	Mark Completed
- Discuss the resources available in Colorado for attorneys who experience discrimination: bar association ethics resources, EEOC processes, and confidential support. - Discuss the psychological cost of constantly navigating bias and the importance of proactive support systems.	
COMPLETE AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING	
Work with Mentee to develop communication and leadership skills for professional working relationships. Consider: Fire & Ice: An Associate's View of Partners Pro Tips for Your First Assignment as an Associate Six Ways to Work Successfully With Support Staff	☐
Discuss appropriate ways to handle situations where a lawyer believes another lawyer has committed an ethical violation or acted unprofessionally or in a discriminatory way; the obligation to report misconduct; and how to handle pressure from a senior colleague to act unethically or to ignore misconduct.	☐
Discuss the importance of feedback and advice for underrepresented attorneys: - Research shows that underrepresented attorneys — particularly attorneys of color and women — often receive less critical, specific feedback than their white male counterparts, which has a substantial impact on career advancement. - Discuss strategies for actively soliciting substantive feedback and how to frame those conversations. - Discuss how to receive, evaluate, and act on feedback constructively — including how to distinguish useful critique from bias-laden commentary. ABA Grit Project — tools designed to enhance effectiveness, retention, and promotion of women lawyers. Stop Asking for Feedback. There is a Better Way.	☐
Have coffee with opposing counsel to practice discussing different perspectives and objectives from both sides of a matter. Specifically reflect on any dynamics that arise from differing identities or backgrounds between counsel.	☐
Discuss the benefits of the Colorado Bar Association Ethics Hotline. <i>Certain members of the CBA Ethics Committee are available for brief discussion of immediate ethical dilemmas. Attorneys are asked to do their own research prior to calling. Call CBA at 303.860.1115 or 800.332.6736 (in-state only). Hotline responses do not necessarily reflect the thinking of the Committee as a whole.</i>	☐
Discuss AI-specific ethics considerations for underrepresented attorneys: - How AI tools may embed and amplify existing biases in legal research, document review, and risk assessment. - The obligation to critically evaluate AI-generated output, not just for accuracy but for potential discriminatory patterns.	☐

Action	Mark Completed
Emerging scholarship on algorithmic bias in legal technology and how underrepresented attorneys can advocate for fairer systems.	

6. DEVELOPING A COMPETENT PRACTICE

Action	Mark Completed
Zones of Competency Analysis: Evaluate how Mentee assesses their legal competencies. Develop an analysis of practice areas, matter types, client types, and Colorado judicial districts where Mentee feels competent. Create a plan to regularly revisit and update this analysis. Discuss how underrepresented attorneys are sometimes steered toward or away from certain practice areas based on identity assumptions — and how Mentee wants to navigate those dynamics.	☐
Long-Term Competency Growth: Identify areas where Mentee does not yet feel competent but wishes to improve. Generate a long-term plan including CLEs, co-counseling, supervised practice, and mentorship resources.	☐
Short-Term Competency Plan: Develop a plan for situations where Mentee is approached to handle a matter outside their current competency zone. Include educational resources, co-counsel options, referral networks, and supervising mentors.	☐
Discuss bar association involvement as a means of developing referral relationships and competency networks — including practice-area associations and affinity bar organizations.	☐
Technology Competency (see Colorado RPC 1.1, Comment [8]): - What AI-assisted research or drafting tools are used in Mentee’s practice area? - How to critically evaluate and verify AI-generated output before relying on it. - Staying current: CLE resources, bar tech committees, and legal technology publications.	☐
Add Other:	☐
Add Other:	☐

7. PROFESSIONALISM IN WORKING WITH CLIENTS (COMPLETE AT LEAST THREE)

Action	Mark Completed
Review the Colorado Principles of Professionalism together. Discuss the ways in which bias may be incorporated into professionalism standards, and whether professionalism standards discriminate against underrepresented identities or force assimilation of underrepresented lawyers. Select at least three principles for further discussion as applied to Mentee's practice: • Which principles feel accessible and aligned with Mentee's authentic professional style? • Which principles feel like they require code-switching or conformity that is costly to Mentee's identity? • Discuss how professionalism norms evolve, and how underrepresented attorneys can advocate for more inclusive standards.	☐
Discuss the initial meeting with a potential client: gathering information, appraising credibility, evaluating whether to accept the representation, how to decline professionally, and making and accepting referrals. Specifically discuss how to incorporate cultural empathy practices into client communication: • How to build trust with clients from underrepresented or marginalized communities who may have historical reasons to distrust legal institutions. • How Mentee's own identity and cultural competency can be an asset in client relationships. • How to handle situations where a client's bias toward Mentee affects the representation.	☐
Discuss the importance of client communication and strategies to maintain it: returning calls and emails promptly, keeping clients informed, written communication practices, and the value of a formal communication policy.	☐
Discuss proper legal counseling: the duties and responsibilities of advising clients, and the respective roles of client and lawyer in decision-making.	☐
Discuss communicating with clients about the business relationship: billing, collections policies, and how to navigate financial conversations professionally.	☐
Discuss client-centered lawyering. Consider: • Do You Have a Client-Centered Law Practice? (Sullivan, 2016) • Who is My Client? Client-Centered Lawyering with Multiple Clients (Lawton, 2015)	☐
Discuss how to deal with a "difficult" client: recognizing warning signs, evaluating when to withdraw, avoiding ethical pitfalls, and professionally terminating a client relationship. See: The Art of Managing Clients — Even the Difficult Ones • Specifically discuss how to handle clients who are dismissive, disrespectful, or discriminatory toward Mentee based on identity — including when withdrawal may be appropriate.	☐

Action	Mark Completed
Discuss the termination of the attorney-client relationship: issues that arise mid-representation, necessary steps and documentation under RPC 1.16.	☐
Discuss maintaining communication with clients after initial work is complete: updates in the law, relevant articles, check-ins while the matter is still live.	☐
Discuss how clients are the best marketing for a law practice. Good representation and genuine relationships go a long way — and for underrepresented attorneys, a strong referral network is especially critical for building a sustainable practice.	☐
Discuss how to handle mistakes made in representation: self-reporting obligations, malpractice implications, and the importance of corrective action.	☐

8. PUBLIC SERVICE (COMPLETE AT LEAST ONE)

Action	Mark Completed
Get acquainted with legal aid programs, local pro bono programs, volunteer boards, and other opportunities for civic and charitable legal service. Discuss the benefits of volunteer legal service: substantive learning, mentorship, networking, and referrals. Discuss how to overcome impediments such as time constraints and training in new practice areas. • Discuss how pro bono and community legal service can be a vehicle for underrepresented attorneys to serve communities that reflect their own background and values. • Colorado Legal Services, Metro Volunteer Lawyers, and other CAMP-affiliated programs. • Colorado’s aspirational standard of 50 hours per year and how to work toward it.	☐
Mentee attends a civic club or community service activity in which Mentor participates. Discuss the professional and personal value of community engagement — and how it can build credibility, relationships, and a sense of purpose beyond the legal profession.	☐
The pair participates in a bar-sponsored or other volunteer program delivering legal services to the public (e.g., legal clinic, self-help center, expungement fair). Discuss the reasons for making time for this work — including how it connects to Mentee’s sense of professional purpose and community obligation.	☐
Discuss opportunities to engage with organizations that specifically serve underrepresented or marginalized communities: • Legal services organizations focused on immigrant rights, housing justice, civil rights, disability rights, or LGBTQ+ advocacy.	☐

Action	Mark Completed
- How Mentee’s identity, lived experience, and cultural competency may make them uniquely positioned to serve certain communities. - How pro bono work in these areas can simultaneously advance access to justice and build Mentee’s professional network and reputation.	

9. DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY (COMPLETE AT LEAST TWO)

Action	Mark Completed
Discuss what diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility mean to both Mentee and Mentor, and how these concepts manifest in the legal profession. Create a safe space for conversation on how the profession is incorporating these values and how it can continue to improve. Describe an ideal practice and legal profession based on these principles — and what each person’s role in building it might be.	☐
Discuss the dimensions of identity for Mentor and Mentee. Which identities are most salient? How have they served each person in the legal profession? How have they created challenges or limitations?	☐
Discuss roadblocks and challenges each may have experienced due to underrepresented identities. What strategies were used? What resources were helpful? What was missing, and how might those gaps be addressed? Discuss how to build from these experiences rather than be defined by them.	☐
Engage in a cultural empathy self-assessment using the Cultural Competence Self-Assessment Checklist . Discuss how cultural empathy supports effective legal representation and a more equitable legal community.	☐
Attend a diversity awareness or training workshop or CLE together. Discuss takeaways and next steps. See: CBA-CLE Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Courses	☐
Discuss various career paths and how they relate to Mentee’s personal and professional identities and goals: - Examine resources for underrepresented attorneys in organizations appropriate to Mentee’s career path. - Discuss how different paths (Big Law, small firm, government, corporate, legal aid, nontraditional) may offer different levels of support and inclusion for underrepresented attorneys — and how to evaluate that fit.	☐
Discuss Mentee’s role as an agent of change within the legal profession: How underrepresented attorneys can use their position and voice to advocate for more equitable workplaces, practices, and policies.	☐

Action	Mark Completed
• The ethical obligation to speak up when witnessing discrimination or bias, and the professional risks of doing so. • How to build coalitions and allies across identity lines for systemic change. • Discuss how Mentor can use their own platform and influence to advocate for Mentee and for systemic equity.	

DEI Resources

Videos:

- [Reimagining Law: DEI in the Legal Profession — What's Working and What Isn't](#)
- [Reimagining Law: Systemic Racism in the Legal Profession](#)
- [Reimagining Law: Supporting LGBTQ+ Legal Professionals](#)
- [Reimagining Law: Creating a Sense of Belonging in the Legal Profession](#)
- [Reimagining Law: How Lawyers Can Combat Discriminatory Behavior](#)

Articles:

- [Commission's DEI News and Articles](#)
- [3 Ways Lawyers Can Promote DEI with the CBA Racial Justice Coalition](#)
- [Inclusive Language is Allyship](#)

American Bar Association:

- [Bias Interrupters Project](#) — You Can't Change What You Can't See: Interrupting Racial and Gender Bias in the Legal Profession
- [Model Diversity Survey](#) from the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Diversity in the Profession
- [Implicit Bias Videos and Toolkit](#) from the ABA Diversity and Inclusion Center

10. INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF "WHOLE-PERSON LAWYERING"

Action	Mark Completed
COMPLETE AT LEAST TWO OF THE FOLLOWING	
This component addresses the unique contribution of the Mentee to the legal profession while working with the Mentor to shape an approach that expresses the whole person as a lawyer — including the dimensions of identity, community, and lived experience that the profession has too often asked underrepresented attorneys to set aside: • What are your values and how do they fit with your choice to become an attorney? How are they expressed in your practice — and how fully do you feel you can express them? • Do you have a spiritual context — a religion, relationship with nature, community tradition, or guiding philosophy? How does it shape why and how you practice?	☐

Action	Mark Completed
• What are your hobbies and how do they connect with your professional life? Do you use them to offset stress? Do they relate directly to your practice? • What talents express the most essential parts of your personal identity? Do you feel you are fully expressing all dimensions of your perspective and experience in your professional life? • What are the key relationships in your life? How are they integrated (or not) into your professional life? How does your professional community reflect your personal community? • What would your ideal integration of personal and professional life look like? • How does your history — including your community, family background, and experiences of challenge or injustice — shape why you became a lawyer and how you practice? • How do your hopes and dreams for the future — for yourself, your community, and the profession — affect your professional decisions? • At the end of your career, what would you like to have accomplished? What would you want to be remembered for? • Do an activity related to the Mentee’s personal interests to build the mentoring relationship outside a formal legal context.	
Discuss how bringing your whole self to the practice of law is both a personal necessity and a professional strength: • How Mentee’s unique background, community ties, and lived experience make them a more empathetic, effective, and trusted advocate. • How authenticity in professional relationships — rather than conformity — creates stronger, more lasting connections with clients, colleagues, and communities. • How the legal profession benefits when underrepresented attorneys bring their full identity to the table, and what is lost when they don’t.	☐
Discuss the legacy Mentee hopes to build through their legal career: • How Mentee’s presence in the profession — as a visible, successful, whole-person lawyer — is itself an act of advocacy and community building. • How Mentee hopes to mentor, sponsor, or advocate for the next generation of underrepresented attorneys. • What systemic changes or improvements Mentee most wants to contribute to during their career. • How Mentor can support Mentee in building and achieving that legacy.	☐

This mentoring plan is a living document. Pairs are encouraged to revisit goals, adjust activities to fit emerging needs, and document their progress throughout the mentoring term. For questions, modifications for CLE credit, or program support, contact the Colorado Attorney Mentoring Program (CAMP).