

Entering the Profession, Connecting with Mentoring

by [Mark C. Palmer](#)



“Excuse me, do you know where we sign in?” They just needed a little guidance. They weren’t afraid to ask. They have had many questions and will have many more. As for right now, they are in a transition point – from law student to law professional. Yet, their education and advancement will continue with time and a little mentoring.

Over one thousand soon-to-be Illinois attorneys poured into the Arie Crown Theater in Chicago last week along with their family and friends. They left the venue as the newest attorneys in the state after taking an oath to the profession and to the responsibilities afforded to those in the legal profession. A new chapter has begun for them. As they embark on this new journey, they must keep an elevated

level of competence and professionalism to best serve themselves, their clients, and the rule of law.

Repeat After Me

A [Pledge of Professionalism was administered](#) to these new lawyers in their first year of law school if they attended an Illinois-based school. At that time, as 1Ls on the cusp of their legal education, they all acknowledged and accepted the privileges and responsibilities inherent in the study of law and becoming a lawyer. They willfully embraced the high standards and ideals demanded of the legal profession, and made the commitment to treat their colleagues and adversaries alike with the same integrity, professionalism, and civility as was expected from them.

Now, with their law degree in hand and after successful passage of the bar exam, they join every lawyer in Illinois who has taken an oath to the Constitutions of the United States and the State of Illinois and to the rule of law. They now have the knowledge, the privilege and the license to serve the ends of justice without prejudice. To diligently serve their clients with integrity and good faith. To remain a zealous advocate while acting with courtesy, civility, integrity, and cooperation toward others, as the bounds of the law allows.

[Illinois Supreme Court Justice Anne M. Burke](#) emphasized these commitments in her comments to the newly admitted attorneys during the First District admission ceremony. Justice Burke spoke of how to maintain civility as an officer of the court to enrich their careers. Respect for our opposing counsel, our clients, the court, and, ultimately, for the rule of law.

Trust, honor, peace, truth and justice. These values, which we hold dear, are simple, but they are not always easy to uphold. And as a lawyer, you will be confronted with challenges and temptations. The strength of your character will be tested. Difficult choices will have to be made. What you choose will define you – as a person and as a lawyer. It also will reflect on the profession as a whole. ...

She continued:

It is my belief that a legal degree is two things – it is an obligation to help others and a medium by which that assistance can be bestowed. So from today forward, I challenge each of you to apply your many talents and fulfill your responsibility. Take pro bono cases. Participate in your local bar associations. And push them to assist charitable institutions. And use your practice to work for equality and justice.

Find A Mentor, Trust A Mentor



Justice Burke concluded her remarks by directing all new Illinois attorneys to participate in the [Supreme Court's Lawyer-to-Lawyer Mentoring Program](#), administered by the Commission on Professionalism. She praised it for being one of the finest, most ambitious and innovative mentoring programs in the country.

The Court recognizes that as you begin your careers, having a skilled and experienced mentor can help you with the transition from law student to a member of the bar. To assist you with this transition, the [Illinois Supreme Court Commission on Professionalism](#) has partnered with [law firms, law schools, bar associations and other organizations throughout Illinois](#) to administer the statewide Mentoring Program. Beyond your professional development,

completion of the Commission's mentoring program satisfies six hours of your new lawyer CLE requirement.

The year-long program rewards both the mentee and the mentor, as they both commit and reaffirm their commitment to their profession. The mentoring program's unique curriculum traces the five tenants of professional responsibility – professionalism, ethics, civility, diversity and inclusion, and wellness, mental health and addiction. Justice Burke went on to highlight that professional and personal friendships often develop, further adding to the integrity of the practice of law and a sense of community amongst the bar.

All new attorneys should have the opportunity to find a supportive mentor as they embark on their legal careers. [Please join me on this endeavor](#). I join Justice Burke in saying I hope you love the law as much as I do, and take to heart your commitment to the morality of law, its values and standards.



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As Professionalism Counsel, Mark leads professionalism programming through the statewide mentoring program, collaborating with stakeholders from Galena to Cairo. Mark also supports the development and delivery of educational programming to lawyers and in law schools. When not in the office, you will likely find Mark and his wife busy raising their twin daughters, enjoying his passion of traveling and eating around the world, and training for his next half marathon.