



FAQ on Legal Apprenticeships in California

By the Sustainable Economies Law Center – www.theSELC.org

And please see our blog on legal apprenticeships – www.LikeLincoln.org

What is the California Law Office Study Program?

California is one of the only states that still allow individuals to become lawyers by training, or “apprenticing,” with a judge or an attorney prior to taking the bar exam. The Law Office Study Program (LOSP) provides a different avenue for applicants to obtain the minimum legal education required for admission to the California Bar. This program can increase access to the profession for prospective lawyers who cannot afford to take time off or pay the substantial tuition costs required to attend a law school. It also allows apprentices to train in the kind of legal career they hope to pursue, particularly for non-traditional careers such as jobs in public interest and solo practice.

What are the benefits for the legal profession and society?

- Apprenticing makes the legal profession more accessible to people of limited financial means. This will increase diversity in the legal profession.
- Apprenticing can increase the number of attorneys in rural and underserved communities, since the apprentices will not be forced to leave their communities in order to study the law.
- Attorneys who do not have crushing debt will have much greater flexibility to offer affordable rates, offer pro bono services, explore innovative forms of practice, and serve the vast number of people in society who currently have little or no access to appropriate or affordable legal services.
- The growth of the legal apprenticeship movement will likely result in a diversification of the methods and materials of legal education.

What are the benefits for the apprentices?

- Apprentices will gain years of legal practice experience and skills prior to becoming an attorney, and, as a result, could potentially be more competent than a new law school graduate at providing client representation.
- No crushing debt; the apprentice may even earn and save money during the period of study.
- No LSAT or law school application process, which can be costly, time consuming, and must generally commence a year before law school even begins.
- Learning at apprentice’s own pace, in a way that best fits an apprentice’s learning style and needs, without the stressful and competitive environment of law school.
- Ability to study law in the same jurisdiction in which the aspiring lawyer plans to eventually practice; many law student leave their communities and fail to return after law school.
- For apprentices who are already engaged in important work or rewarding jobs, the apprenticeship process, unlike most law schools, does not require that the apprentice leave that work or put it on hold.
- Potential for long-term employment and/or partnership with the supervising attorney.
- Apprentices will gain firsthand experience with the inner workings of a law practice, which will empower the apprentice to create their own law practice.
- During the term of study, apprentices, likely more so than the average law school graduate, may have built a significant number of connections to future clients, mentors, colleagues, and other professionals who will be helpful in their practice of the law.

What are the benefits of becoming an apprentice supervisor?

- Teaching the law to apprentices will improve an attorney’s skills in explaining complex legal topics, which will improve client counseling skills and an attorney’s own understanding of the law.



- Teaching the law will help an attorney to revisit legal questions and topics that the attorney may have forgotten or begun to take for granted. As an added benefit, the attorney will revisit the material with the eyes of an experienced practitioner, which gives new context to the material.
- Apprentices may bring new skills and/or cultural and linguistic competencies to an attorney's practice.
- Cultivating particular areas of expertise in apprentices could have great benefit to the attorney's practice and allow the attorney to serve a greater number or more diverse group of clients.
- The attorney will potentially enjoy the company of and will likely find joy in helping an apprentice to develop their skills and knowledge.
- Apprentices will be able to closely observe the work of the attorney, and the attorney will likely grow and mature in response to feedback and input offered by apprentices.
- For reasons that are hard to prove or explain, it's just fun and deeply satisfying to supervise apprentices.

How do I become an apprentice supervisor, and what's expected of me?

Attorney supervisors must be practicing lawyers who have been admitted to the California bar and remain in good standing, and who have practiced for at least five years. An attorney supervisor can only supervise two apprentices simultaneously.

The California Bar's Rules state that an attorney supervisor must:¹

- Submit an outline of the proposed course of instruction for the apprentice within thirty (30) days of the apprentice beginning her term;
- Personally and directly supervise the applicant at least five hours a week;
- Issue monthly exams on the topic areas of study covered in the previous month;
- Every six months, submit a report (on a form) to the Bar Admissions Committee about the number of hours the applicant studied in the law office during business hours; the number of hours devoted to supervision; and the books, materials, and content studied.

What's expected of the apprentice?

Each apprentice must demonstrate to the California Bar that her legal education is functionally equivalent to other learning options, such as an accredited or unaccredited law school, or a distance-learning law program. To do this, apprentices must provide the following to the Bar:

- Submit a registration form and a registration fee, within thirty days of beginning study;
- Submit regular six-month reports within thirty days of each six-month period closing (these reports can be submitted as part of the attorney supervisors' reports);
- Study in the attorney supervisor's office during regular business hours for at least 18 hours/week for 48 weeks each year (and no less than 24 week/year for half credit) for four years.
- Pass the First-Year Law Students' Exam ("baby bar") and the regular bar exam;
- Pass an evaluation of Moral Character.
- Pass the Multistate Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE)

1. Ch. 3, Rules 4.26, 4.29, *Admissions and Educational Standards for Admission to Practice Law in California* (2009).