



# VIRTUAL Mentor Program

## HANDBOOK FOR MENTORS AND MENTEES

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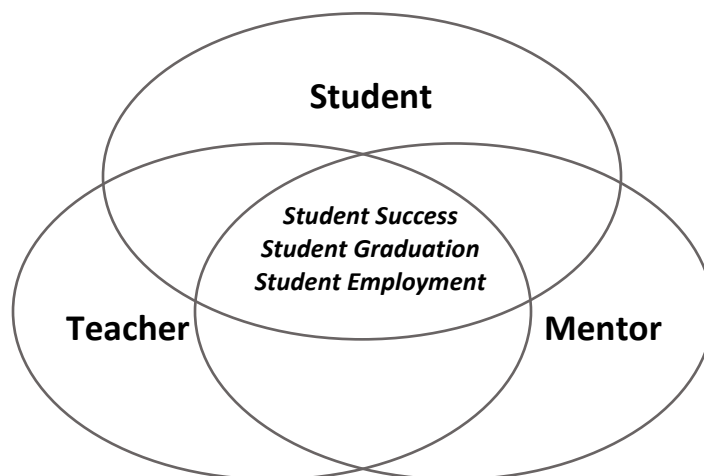
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*Dear mentors and mentees:*

*Welcome to the Virtual Mentor Program! The National Court Reporters Association is committed to promoting a program of mentorship within our community and to ensuring the standard of excellence for which our profession is known. The goal of the Virtual Mentor Program is to promote and support academic success and to establish a meaningful network within the profession that will expose students to a variety of career possibilities.*

*Our philosophy envisions mentors as integral partners in students' educations. Together with teachers, mentors can empower students to reach their educational and professional goals.*

*Teacher + student + mentor = student success | student graduation | student employment!*



*NCRA developed the Virtual Mentor Program Handbook to guide mentors and mentees through the mentoring relationship. We offer it as a resource for tips, suggestions, ideas, and questions.*

*We wish you the best of luck in your academic and professional pursuits!*

**Cynthia Bruce Andrews**  
 Director, Professional Development Programs



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*National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) provides no guarantees regarding the mentor/mentee relationship. NCRA will make all attempts to match likeminded individuals for a successful experience. Participation in this program is not a guarantee of future employment. NCRA hopes that this network will enhance the mentee’s career prospects, but such outcomes are the responsibility of the mentee and not of the mentor or NCRA. The mentee understands this relationship is an educational forum in which to discuss general issues faced in his/her court reporting program. Mentors are volunteers, and the advice given over the course of the relationship is intended to guide and help the mentee; it is not intended to replace or challenge the mentee’s current educational path.*

*Mentors and mentees agree to follow the NCRA Standard Agreement and will contact the Mentoring Program Manager at [vmp@ncra.org](mailto:vmp@ncra.org) to discuss any questions or concerns.*



## Benefits for the mentor

Contributing time and expertise as a mentor is a valuable way to give back and to foster the next generation of court reporters. Mentoring can be both personally and professionally rewarding as mentors learn the value in helping their students succeed. Benefits of mentoring include:

### Contribution to the advancement of the profession

- Passing on years of experience to those who are just starting out in the field
- Carrying on a long tradition of excellence and achievement
- Exposing students to the variety of available career paths



### Career enhancement

- Expanding professional networks and increasing visibility
- Honing workplace coaching and interpersonal communication skills
- Staying current with the latest in technological and educational trends
- Earning Professional Development Credits (PDCs)\*

### Personal satisfaction

- Discovering a renewed sense of purpose by volunteering to help others
- Feeling energized by working with newer colleagues
- Giving back by ushering a new class of students into the world of court reporting

\*NCRA members mentoring a student through this program may be eligible for Professional Development Credits (PDCs) toward NCRA certification(s). Please download the [Mentoring/Interning Log](#) for more details. NCRA members can find information on PDCs on the [NCRA website](#) and on the [Continuing Education Web page](#).

*"I feel self-fulfilled in knowing I can further the career of court reporting."*

*"It's been a very rewarding experience for me personally to be able to help her with her writing. Just sharing my knowledge and experience with her has helped to allay many of her frustrations and uncertainties about school and the profession as a whole."*

*"Mentoring students makes me stay on top of professional issues and keeps my skills fresh."*



## Benefits for the mentee

Working with a mentor can be an incalculable asset for a court reporting student. Mentees gain valuable experience by forging a one-on-one relationship with a working court reporter or broadcast or CART captioner. Mentors can fulfill a variety of roles over the course of a student's career:

### A support system

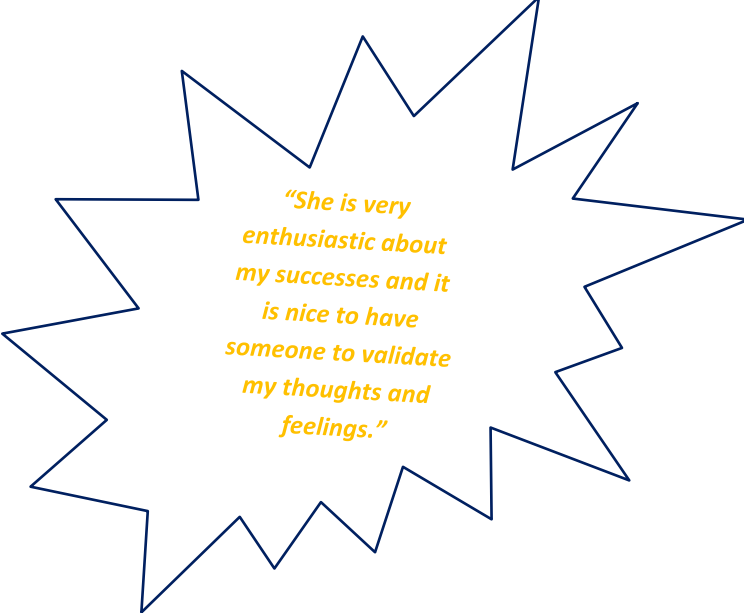
- Ask questions and share concerns about the learning process.
- Learn how to stay motivated while struggling with skills, speedbuilding, and overcoming plateaus.
- Find encouragement in managing stress and maintaining a healthy work/life balance.

### A role model

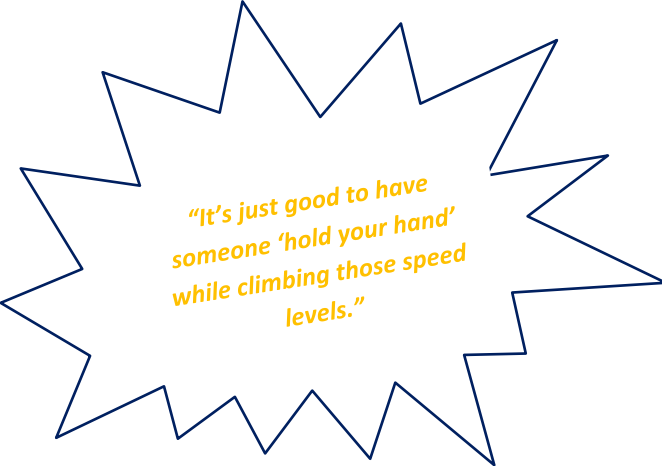
- Acquire firsthand insight into the real world of court reporting.
- Discuss personal frustrations, failures, and successes.
- Get introduced to the roles and responsibilities of court reporters in the field.
- Gain historical knowledge of the profession and years of on-the-job experience.

### A career coach

- Work with a mentor to develop formal and informal professional networks.
- Explore different career paths and set attainable goals.
- Acquire valuable assistance with job shadowing and internship opportunities.



*"She is very enthusiastic about my successes and it is nice to have someone to validate my thoughts and feelings."*



*"It's just good to have someone 'hold your hand' while climbing those speed levels."*

## The role of NCRA

The 2016 CASE standards<sup>1</sup> call for all NCRA-approved court reporting programs to foster a mentoring component for their students. The Virtual Mentor Program connects students with veteran court reporters so that students can get the guidance and support they need. NCRA is invested in making the experience as rewarding and productive as possible and as such will be overseeing the process in the following manner:

### 1. Managing the registration process

Interested professionals and students can volunteer for mentoring by submitting an application, providing basic biographical and professional background information, through the [Virtual Mentor Program home page](#). Once accepted into the program, NCRA will notify participants via email that they have been added to the Virtual Mentor Program database.

### 2. Matching mentors and mentees

Even though the program is virtual, every effort is made to match mentors with mentees based on geographical proximity, mentoring needs, or similar areas of interest (i.e. captioning, CART, official, freelance, or realtime). Depending on availability and demand, students may be matched with a mentor the same day they register, or they may wait up to a month or more. Mentors typically wait even longer. Once a match is made, the Virtual Mentor Program will set up an e-introduction with both mentor and mentee.

### 3. Offering ongoing assistance

Throughout the mentoring process, the Virtual Mentor Program is always available as a resource for questions or concerns. Occasionally, situations arise in which mentors or mentees are mismatched due to conflicting expectations or personalities. In other cases, one person may fail to contact the other once an initial match is made, or someone simply does not have time to continue the mentoring relationship after it has begun. The Virtual Mentor Program staff is available to reassign mentors or mentees if needed. Participants can contact the [Mentoring Program Manager](#) if any issues arise, and the manager will attempt to resolve them in a timely manner.

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<sup>1</sup> Council on Approved Student Education General Requirements and Minimum Standards for Approved Court Reporting Programs



#### 4. Conducting periodic follow-ups

The Virtual Mentor Program staff always appreciates suggestions and feedback about how the program can better serve our community. Surveys are sent out at various intervals to mentors and mentees to check in on their activities, their progress, their difficulties, and most especially, their successes, but questions and comments are welcome any time at [vmp@ncra.org](mailto:vmp@ncra.org).



## Responsibilities of the mentor

*Merriam-Webster* defines a mentor as “a trusted counsel or guide.” Mentors play several parts. Many students request mentors when they reach plateaus, and connecting with someone who has made it through these milestones in the past can be an inspiration. Other students have questions about dealing with test anxiety, study habits, or career choices. Mentors act as resources, coaches, and role models. An effective mentor:

### Works with the mentee to set expectations

- Introduce yourself and share your own educational and professional background.
- Together with your mentee, discuss the logistics of communication, such as frequency, duration, and medium (e.g. phone, email, Skype, or in person).
- Get to know your student and ask about his/her specific mentoring needs.
- Respect the value of classroom objectives set by the teacher; help your student work hard to achieve them.

### Encourages and motivates

- Listen and respond to the concerns and questions of your student.
- Give your student confidence as he/she climbs the hurdles of speedbuilding.
- Assist your mentee in negotiating a successful work/life balance.
- Acknowledge and validate disappointments; recognize and celebrate achievements.

### Cultivates professionals in the industry

- Model proper professional behavior, and share insider tips and wisdom about the organizational culture.
- Coach your student on the various career paths available and help set attainable goals.
- Help your mentee pursue job shadowing and internship opportunities.
- Encourage your student to become part of the professional community through networking, attending conferences, participating in webinars, and joining NCRA and other associations.



*“Court reporting is a challenging curriculum and nowadays some students must work full time and go to school part time. They get discouraged, so it is great to encourage the students to move forward as well as hold them accountable.”*



## Responsibilities of the mentee

As of 2016, all newly NCRA-approved court reporting programs will be instructing students to establish a mentoring relationship with a professional court reporter or broadcast or CART captioner. Instructors and mentors want to see students reach their potential, but mentees must be proactive in taking ownership of their own success. A successful mentee:

### Works with the mentor to set expectations

- Introduce yourself and share your own educational and professional background.
- Together with your mentor, discuss the logistics of communication, such as frequency, duration, and medium (e.g. phone, email, Skype, or in person).
- Be open with your mentor about any specific mentoring needs you may have.
- Respect the value of classroom objectives set by the teacher; ask your mentor to help you achieve them.

### Values the mentor's experience

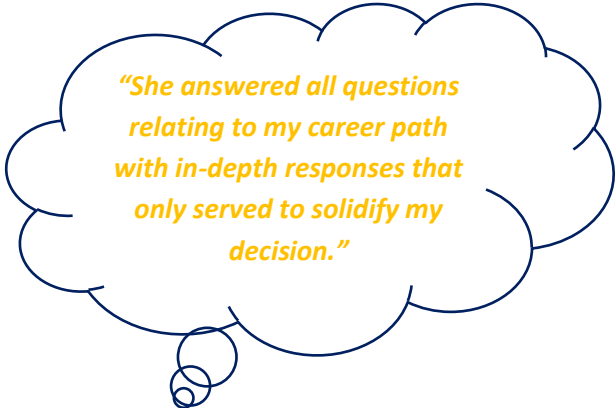
- Learn from your mentor's years of work in the field and career expertise.
- Take the opportunity to listen, learn, and interact.
- Don't be afraid to ask for help, seek advice, or voice concerns.
- Strategize with your mentor about goals and career choices.

### Honors the mentor/mentee relationship

- Be respectful of your mentor's time and efforts; be aware of potential time constraints.
- Accept constructive feedback and be willing to take advice.
- Let your mentor know if you need to alter or end the mentoring relationship for any reason.



*"If I wasn't in contact with a working reporter I would have more worries about my progress and potential."*



*"She answered all questions relating to my career path with in-depth responses that only served to solidify my decision."*

## Topics of discussion

Many court reporting professionals who volunteer to be mentors do not have prior experience working with a mentee. And for most students this is their first time getting a mentor. Forging an initial bond may go smoothly, but sometimes it can be challenging to negotiate and sustain a protracted relationship. The following are some suggested questions for both mentors and mentees who may need ideas for topics to discuss.

### Questions for mentors to ask:

- What is the best way for us to get in touch with each other?
- How often would you like to communicate?
- What was the speed of your last test?
- Why did you choose to go into the field of court reporting?
- What are you having the most difficulty with in school?
- How many hours a week do you spend on practice?
- Have you thought about which area you would like to work in (i.e. captioning, CART, freelance, official, or realtime)?

### Questions for mentees to ask:

- What is the best way for us to get in touch with each other?
- How often would you like to communicate?
- Why did you decide to get into the field of court reporting?
- What are the aspects that you enjoy most about your profession?
- How should I decide which area to go into (i.e. captioning, CART, freelance, official, or realtime)?
- What certifications do you have? How do I get my certifications?
- Do you have some suggestions about how can I balance full-time work with my studies?
- How many hours should I spend on practice? What are some good study habits?
- What are some ways that I can overcome my stress and test-taking anxiety?
- What makes it worth all the time and frustration that it takes to get through school?
- Would it be possible to shadow you at your job once I am midway through my program?
- Can you help me pursue internship opportunities toward the end of my program?



## NCRA Standard Agreement

NCRA and the Virtual Mentor Program emphasize that the mentor/mentee relationship is voluntary. The mentoring relationship functions best, however, when there is a commitment on both sides to mutual respect, understanding, and confidentiality. NCRA requires that all participants adhere to certain standards of behavior while involved in the mentoring program. The NCRA Standard Agreement is intended to enhance the learning experience for both mentors and mentees and to increase their potential for success. Participants must sign and submit the agreement as part of the registration process.

*Below is an example of the agreement that mentors are asked to sign upon registering for the Virtual Mentor Program:*

### NCRA Standard Agreement Form – Mentor

- I will introduce myself to my mentee via email or phone upon being matched by the Virtual Mentor Program.
- My mentee and I will agree on the parameters and logistics of our communication.
- I respect my mentee's time, and I will answer emails or phone calls within a reasonable time frame.
- I understand the relationship between my mentee and me is professional in nature and that our communications must remain confidential.
- I acknowledge that my views, opinions, guidance, and remarks are personal and may not reflect the views, opinions, guidance, or remarks of the National Court Reporters Association or any other professional association.
- I understand that my assignment as a mentor is voluntary. If I elect to discontinue my participation in the NCRA Virtual Mentor Program, or if I wish to be assigned a different mentee, I agree to promptly email my student of this decision. As a courtesy, I will also notify the Virtual Mentor Program of my decision via email at [vmp@ncra.org](mailto:vmp@ncra.org) so that another mentor may be assigned to my student.
- I promise to abide by this agreement adopted by the National Court Reporters Association Virtual Mentor Program. If I fail to adhere to this agreement, I understand and agree that my mentoring relationship may be terminated, and I may be removed from the mentoring list.



*Below is an example of the agreement that mentees are asked to sign upon registering for the Virtual Mentor Program:*

### **NCRA Standard Agreement Form – Mentee**

- I will introduce myself to my mentor via email or phone upon being matched by the Virtual Mentor Program.
- My mentor and I will agree on the parameters and logistics of our communication.
- I respect my mentor's time, and I will answer emails or phone calls within a reasonable time frame.
- I understand the relationship between my mentor and me is professional in nature and that our communications must remain confidential.
- I acknowledge that the views, opinions, guidance, and remarks of my mentor are personal and may not reflect the views, opinions, guidance, or remarks of the National Court Reporters Association or any other professional association.
- I understand that my assignment as a mentee is voluntary. If I elect to discontinue my participation in the NCRA Virtual Mentor Program, or if I wish to be assigned a different Mentor, I agree to promptly email my mentor of this decision. As a courtesy, I will also notify the Virtual Mentor Program of my decision via email at [vmp@ncra.org](mailto:vmp@ncra.org) so that another student may be assigned to my mentor.
- I promise to abide by this agreement adopted by the National Court Reporters Association Virtual Mentor Program. If I fail to adhere to this agreement, I understand and agree that my mentoring relationship may be terminated, and I may be removed from the mentoring list.



## Frequently asked questions

Virtual mentoring may be a new concept to many people and the NCRA Virtual Mentoring Team is here to help you along the way. Following are answers to some frequently asked questions, as well as some other resources for further reading. For other questions, please feel free to contact the [Mentoring Program Manager](#).

### 1. How does virtual mentoring work?

Virtual mentoring is a way for court reporting professionals and students to participate in a mentoring relationship in a virtual (i.e. remote) setting. Mentors and mentees are matched by NCRA's Virtual Mentor Program and introduced via email. Most of our participants are not geographically close to each other and find it convenient to communicate via phone, email, or Skype.

### 2. Who is eligible to be a mentor?

Any professional court reporter or broadcast or CART captioner is eligible to register for the Virtual Mentor Program. NCRA membership is not a requirement.

### 3. Who is eligible to be a mentee?

Any student who is currently enrolled in a court reporting training program is eligible to register for the Virtual Mentor Program. NCRA membership is not a requirement.

### 4. How do I become a mentor?

Register to be a mentor by submitting the [mentor sign-up form](#) on the Virtual Mentor Program home page.

### 5. How do I become a mentee?

Register to be a mentee by submitting the [mentee sign-up form](#) on the Virtual Mentor Program home page.

### 6. What is my role as a mentor?

A mentor acts as a coach, a role model, and a resource. A mentor will work together with the student and the teacher to set reasonable goals for academic progress, offer support and feedback when needed, and introduce the mentee to the "ins and outs" of the profession.

### 7. How are the mentors and mentees matched?

Once participants are registered, their names are entered into the Virtual Mentor Program database. Every effort is made to connect students with mentors based on geographic proximity, mentoring needs, and similar areas of interest (i.e. captioning, CART, freelance, official, or realtime).



**8. What is the time commitment expected of a mentor?**

Every mentoring relationship is different, and mentors and mentees will want to have an initial discussion about what works best for both parties regarding how often, for how long, and in what manner to keep in touch. It is best to set realistic expectations at the outset, but these will naturally evolve over time as the needs of the mentee and/or the availability of the mentor change. As with any relationship, ongoing communication is essential.

**9. How long do a mentor and mentee typically work together?**

There is no specific time frame for the mentoring arrangement, but a minimum recommended commitment would be a year.

**10. How many students can a mentor be matched with?**

Mentors will only be matched with one mentee at any given time. If requested, however, mentors may be assigned up to three students. If a mentor becomes temporarily unable to take on a student (or additional students), please advise the Mentoring Program Manager to be taken off the mentor list.

**11. Can mentors receive Professional Development Credits for mentoring a student?**

NCRA members mentoring a student through the Virtual Mentor Program may be eligible for PDCs toward NCRA certification(s). Please download the [Mentoring/Interning Log](#) on the Virtual Mentor Program home page for more details. Members can find information on PDCs on the [NCRA website](#) and on the [Continuing Education Web page](#).

**12. What should I do if I want to change my mentor or mentee?**

There are times when the mentoring arrangement simply does not go smoothly. This can be due to scheduling conflicts, personality differences, or other changes in life circumstances. If difficulties arise, staff is always available as a point of mutual contact. The goal of the Virtual Mentor Program is to make the relationship as positive and productive as possible. In the unfortunate event that a change needs to be made, the Mentoring Program Manager will work with both mentor and mentee to make reassignments that are better suited to each person's needs.

**13. What is the NCRA Standard Agreement? Do I have to sign it?**

NCRA requires that all participants adhere to certain standards of behavior while involved in the Virtual Mentor Program. The NCRA Standard Agreement is intended to enhance the learning experience for both mentors and mentees and to increase their potential for success. Mentors and mentees are asked to sign and submit the Agreement as part of the registration process.



#### **14. Are mentors required to help their mentees find job shadowing and internship opportunities?**

Although not a requirement, connecting mentees with career development opportunities toward the end of their court reporting training programs would be an invaluable component of any mentoring relationship. NCRA asks all mentors to be available, if possible, as a resource for their mentees and other local students who are seeking out job shadowing and internship possibilities.

#### **15. Where can I get more information if I still have questions?**

Please visit the Virtual Mentor Program [home page](#) or email the Mentoring Program Manager at [vmp@ncra.org](mailto:vmp@ncra.org) for more information.

### **More resources**

For more information on mentoring, please visit these additional sites:

[It Takes a Mentor](#) (*New York Times*)

[How to Be an Amazing Mentor](#) (HubSpot blog)

[How to Be a Great Mentor](#) (Forbes)

[Mentoring 101](#) (Monster)

