

Labor & Employment Law Section's Mentoring Program Guidelines For Mentors and Mentees

Being a successful lawyer requires more than a law school education. It also requires skills and experience gained through the actual practice of law and by interacting with those more seasoned in the field. Participation in the New York State Bar Association activities generally and in those of the Labor & Employment Law Section in particular presents an excellent opportunity for junior attorneys to interact with leaders of the Bar who can help those new to the field to navigate the labor and employment law terrain.

The L&E Section's Mentoring Program seeks to foster relationships between experienced labor and employment lawyers active in our Section and attorneys new to the field. A mentor-mentee relationship benefits both parties. The mentee gains access to practical advice and invaluable information regarding the labor and employment law field from leaders with many years of experience. The mentor gains by giving back to the Section and to the legal profession and by enhancing his or her understanding of the needs and goals of the next generation of labor and employment lawyers. Finally, the L&E Section gains by helping to build bridges between the generations and to develop the next generation of Section leadership and labor and employment law attorneys in New York.

A Few Cautionary Notes

First, the mentor-mentee relationship is not intended to create, and does not create, an attorney-client relationship. Care must therefore be taken to protect client confidences on both sides of the mentor relationship. Client names and confidential information must not be disclosed by and between the mentor and mentee in the context of the mentor relationship.

Second, the mentor relationship is also not intended to create, expressly or implicitly, a co-counsel relationship. Consequently, legal advice related to

pending or potential client relationships should not be offered or solicited, and client identities and confidences should not be disclosed.

Third, where applicable, the mentees must obtain their employers' express approval to participate in the Program.

Finally, the mentor relationship is one built on respect and courtesy. Neither the mentor nor the mentee should expect more from the relationship than the Program is intended to provide, and each must be sensitive both to the demands on time and resources of the other. For example, neither should promote the idea or anticipate that the relationship will lead to a future professional or employment relationship between the two.

Guidelines for Both Mentors and Mentees

1. Schedule an introductory meeting as soon as possible after the mentor relationship is confirmed, both to get to know each other and to discuss shared goals and expectations for the relationship, bearing in mind the particular interests and needs of the mentee.
2. Be respectful of each other's time, resources, and commitment. At the outset of the relationship, an understanding should be reached as to the frequency and nature of the contact between mentor and mentee.
3. The mentor should make every effort to introduce the mentee to the benefits of bar activities, especially of the NYSBA and of our Section. Where possible, the mentor should attempt to accompany his or her mentee to NYSBA and Section activities and to seek out bar and other professional activities that can be pursued jointly.
4. The mentor cannot serve as a law partner, research resource, placement officer, or surrogate employer nor can he or she regard the mentor relationship as an opportunity for recruitment. However, the mentor should be prepared to discuss career options with the mentee, including lessons

learned in the course of the mentor's career, and to introduce the mentee to colleagues, judges, bar leaders and other professionals, as appropriate.

5. Social activities like lunches, cocktail parties, sporting and other such events, where appropriate, also may be pursued solely at the option of both parties.
6. Examples of possible topics of discussion: the importance of ethical and professional behavior in the practice of law; tips on developing and promoting client relationships; successful business development techniques; practice management and effective work habits; the importance, and value, of pro bono and community service.
7. Both mentor and mentee should recognize that no question is a stupid question in a healthy mentor relationship.
8. Both mentor and mentee should make it a point to provide feedback to each other, positive and negative (discreetly delivered), so that each can get the most out of the relationship. Indeed, the parties should agree on a plan for evaluating the relationship, periodically during the mentor relationship and at its conclusion. Separate feedback should be provided to the Program leaders so that they can learn from the experiences of existing mentors and mentees.