

BALIF “CONNECTIONS” MENTORING PROGRAM GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS 2016-2017

Overview

BALIF’s Connections mentoring program gives law students and newer lawyers the opportunity to be matched with established Bay Area attorneys who practice in variety of settings, including large and small firms, nonprofit and public interest organizations, and governments. Mentors provide guidance about the nuts and bolts of careers in the law, as well as practical advice to help mentees build their job seeking and networking skills. For mentees, the Connections program offers a great opportunity for networking, skills development, and career building in the LGBT legal community by some of the best in the field, including judges, law firm partners, senior public interest and government attorneys, and corporate in-house counsel.

Mentors and mentees must commit to meeting at least three times in person during the mentorship year (from September to May) and be willing to communicate more frequently by phone and email. Mentor/Mentee pairs will be assigned on a rolling basis between September and October.

In the spring, BALIF will seek nominations from mentees for BALIF’s “Mentor of the Year” award, to be awarded around May 2017.

Guidelines for Mentors

- **Introduction:** Once the mentee contacts you, be sure to discuss the time you are able to commit to the mentoring relationship. You may also wish to set up your first meeting.
- **Specifics:** Let the mentee know the best time to reach you. To ensure follow up, have a note in your calendar to contact your mentee.
- **Discussion/experiences:** Advise the mentee on general issues and specific questions he or she might have; share your experiences that have shaped your career.
- **Keep it professional.** The role of a mentor is a professional one. Encourage open communication with your mentee, but remember that a mentor is a counselor, not necessarily a best friend.

Guidelines for Mentees

- **Consideration:** Be mindful of your mentor’s schedule. Do not schedule a mentoring meeting and fail to show up on time. If your mentor is difficult to reach from time to time, do not be offended, but realize how demanding it can be for busy attorneys to be a mentor. Express gratitude for your mentor’s involvement and energies on your behalf.
- **Introduction:** It is your responsibility to contact the mentor. Initiate the first call, introduce yourself, find out when it is best to contact your mentor, and set up your first meeting.
- **Discussion:** You should initiate discussion of specific issues and questions that you have, being mindful of your mentor’s role. The mentorship program is not an opportunity to ask for a job, but it is a chance to build a professional relationship that may lead to future contacts and opportunities.

- **Keep it professional.** Remember that you have a professional relationship with your mentor. A mentor is a counselor, not necessarily a best friend.

Discussion Topics/Activities for Mentors

- Take the mentee out for lunch or coffee.
- Tell a career story.
- Talk about what you do every day, for example:
 - General description of your job
 - Major tasks, specific responsibilities
 - How your job fits in to your overall firm/organization
 - How you spend a typical day
 - Personal qualities needed for your type of work
 - How you got started in your job
 - Other jobs you have held, skills you developed, relationship to your present job
 - Your recommendations to others for acquiring these skills, and suggestions you would give someone applying for your job
 - Obstacles or barriers you had to overcome to get where you are now
 - Issues in integrating personal and family life with career objectives and concerns

Discussion Topics/Activities for Mentees

- Identify personal goals for the mentoring relationship and discuss them with your mentor.
- Share successes with your mentor.
- Do some thinking and planning about current career direction and goals – how can the mentor help advise you on these? Be proactive.
- Interview the mentor about his or her career path.
- Be clear about what you want from your mentor at any given time – advice on a particular decision you are facing? Recommendations for strategies to meet a long-term goal? Words of wisdom about a particular practice area?



Questions?

Contact BALIF's Young Lawyers & Law Students Committee Chairs at
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