

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

MEMORANDUM GC 06-03

March 9, 2006

TO: All Division and Office Heads, Regional Directors,
Officers-in-Charge, and Resident Officers

FROM: Ronald Meisburg, General Counsel

SUBJECT: Mentoring Program and Best Practices Guide

Memorandum GC 03-03 requested that the heads of all General Counsel Field and Headquarters offices institute a Mentoring Pilot Program beginning July 16, 2003. Your efforts have created a program that facilitates the transition of our new hires into the work of the Agency and to our culture of excellence. I am committed to continuing the mentoring program, which furthers my goal of developing a highly skilled and motivated workforce that reflects the diversity of our Nation.

Your responses to the evaluations of the first year of the program contain some excellent ideas for improving the mentoring program. Reviewing those responses, the Management Diversity Committee has identified some additional best practices for the program. Those ideas are incorporated in the attached amended Best Practices Guide.

I appreciate your continued support of the Agency's commitment to providing excellent service to the public with a workforce reflective of the public we serve.

/s/
R. M.

cc: NLRBU

Attachments

MEMORANDUM GC 06-03

MENTORING POLICY

It is the General Counsel's policy that all field offices and GC-side headquarters offices have effective mentoring programs for all nonsupervisory employees who are new to the Agency, and where appropriate, for employees who are new to their respective offices or new to their particular positions. Effective mentoring programs are an asset to the Agency and are of value as a recruitment and retention tool. Such programs also present an opportunity for our offices to ensure that the staff members receive the support that they need to enter or to transition into new positions. Mentoring programs also provide an excellent opportunity for offices to identify those individuals who are most effective at developing independence in mentees and in assisting them to become acculturated to the office and to the Agency.

Guidelines for the nationwide mentoring program are provided below. In light of the feedback that we received from the managers and supervisors and in light of the information provided in the Mentoring Survey, it is important that flexibility, within those guidelines, be permitted so that mentoring programs appropriate for each office are retained or developed. Offices seeking to improve or augment mentoring programs may use the report from the Mentoring Committee's Summary of Mentoring/Pairing Program Survey Report and the Best Practices Guide as resources.

Policy Guidelines

1. Mentors should be provided to all nonsupervisory employees, professionals and support staff, who are new to the Agency, and where appropriate, for employees who are new to their offices or new to their positions. A mentor should be assigned to a mentor as soon as possible after the initial appointment.
2. The Mentor serves as a personal resource to assist the mentee to understand his/her new responsibilities, and the office culture. Mentors assist mentees to assimilate into the office and serve as a technical resource. Mentors have no responsibility for the work assignments, job development, or job training of the mentees. The mentor/mentee relationship does not replace the supervisor/employee relationship.
3. Mentors should possess excellent technical expertise, work habits, interpersonal skills, communication skills, and knowledge of office policies and procedures. However, the assignment of a mentor does not preclude management from assigning other employees to help train the new employee on particular assignments.
4. Local managers will remain responsible for the design and implementation of mentoring programs in individual offices and will decide in what manner mentors are assigned, consistent with these policy guidelines.
5. Supervisors remain the primary source of work assignment, instruction, guidance and appraisal for employees.

6. The mentoring programs should supplement the orientation and training programs provided in the offices.
7. The General Counsel's offices should provide an initial minimum six-month mentoring program for all employees who are new to their offices or new to their positions. However, the mentees should have access to a mentor during the first year that they are new to their offices or new to their positions.
8. The General Counsel will evaluate the mentoring program each fiscal year and adjust the program, as appropriate.
9. Annually, each office will provided a status report on's its mentoring program to the General Counsel's Division Head. The report will identify the managers responsible for the program and describing the best practices, as well as pitfalls observed in its program.
10. A voluntary participant evaluation form is available for all mentors and mentees to complete and submit at the end of their mentoring program.
11. A "Best Practices Guide" on the General Counsel's mentoring programs is available to all participating offices. It will be updated periodically.

Mentoring Program Best Practices

The following are some suggestions and best practices for mentoring programs gleaned from the General Counsel's managers and supervisors. The General Counsel will update this information with additional best practices as they become available.

1. When employees are new to an office, they should be made to feel comfortable and welcome and quickly be introduced to a broad range of work experiences. Pairing new employees with those who are more seasoned is an excellent way to orient new hires to Agency work and office personnel and policies.
2. A good mentoring program provides new employees an opportunity to speak openly and on a daily basis, with an experienced coworker concerning his/her job duties, the office culture, as well as the office standard operating procedures and policies, among other things. At the same time, the mentor gains valuable experience and job satisfaction.
3. When selecting mentors, it is important to focus on the prospective mentors' skills, knowledge, experience, willingness to serve, and positive personality traits. Selecting managers may consider establishing a pool of mentors from which to assign participants when new employees are hired. Management may solicit volunteers or assign mentoring duties. Management is responsible for pairing mentors and mentees.
4. Those offices that develop expectations for their mentoring program are most successful in fully integrating new employees into the office "culture" and orienting new employees to Agency policies and practices. The expectations stated by offices with successful mentoring programs are for their programs to:
 - a. provide technical expertise and assistance;
 - b. "gently communicate" guidance to mentees;
 - c. afford mentees an opportunity to ask questions informally;
 - d. offer mentees exposure to different styles/skills, etc.;
 - e. enable mentees to develop their own strengths,
 - f. and enhance employee career development.
5. Depending on the seniority and size of the staff, as well as the needs of the office, certain temporary, additional, task-specific mentoring assignments can be made. These assignments last for the duration of a particular task, e.g., processing of an R case, or investigating an unfair labor practice charge. In such assignments, the new employee is assigned to a more experienced employee with excellent skills in a particular area.
6. Minorities, women, and alter-able employees should be encouraged to serve as mentors but should be selected based on the same criteria as non-minority

mentors. Diversity should be only one consideration in the pairing of mentors and mentees.

7. Managers should be sensitive to the need for positive interaction between the mentor and mentee and should consider reassignment when appropriate.
8. The annual office status report should include feedback on the program's successes, failures, updates, and suggestions.

**FY 2006 Management Survey Questionnaire
For Mentoring Program**

To: All Regional Directors, Acting Regional Directors,
General Counsel Division and Office Heads

GC Memo 06- (issued February , 2006) directed the continuation of the "Mentoring Program and Best Practices Guide" in all of the General Counsel's Divisional and Regional Offices. Please complete this questionnaire survey regarding the experience of your office with this program and return the survey to Yvette Hatfield, Deputy Assistant General Counsel by e-mail or fax no later than October 6, 2006. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Office/Region _____

1. How many employees participated in the Mentoring Program as a mentee?

- a. Professional Employees _____
- b. Support Staff Employees _____

2. How many employees participated in the Mentoring Program as a mentor?

- a. Professional Employees _____
- b. Support Staff Employees _____

3. Under the program, all new employees are to be provided mentors. If a new employee was not provided a mentor, please explain.

4. Did your office have difficulty in finding a sufficient number of employees to serve as mentors:? _____ If yes, please explain.

5. How were mentors selected?

- a. Volunteer _____
- b. Selected by management _____
- c. Other _____

6. The mentor/mentee relationship is scheduled to last for a minimum of 6 months. Were any pairings changed during this period? _____
If so, please explain why? _____

7. Did any employee serve as a mentor to more than one person? _____
If yes, was the mentoring assignment to more than one person served
simultaneously or staggered? (i.e. did the mentor assist two or more employees
at the same time?) _____

Please explain _____

8. What changes in the program, if any, were implemented during this year?

Why were the changes implemented? _____

Were these changes successful? Please explain.

9. How is the Mentoring Program monitored/managed in your Region/Office
(i.e., by committee, an individual manager, etc.)? _____

10. Based on your assessment of your Office's/Region's Mentoring Program
during this fiscal year, what changes, if any, were made/will be made to the
program?

11. Have you seen or are you seeing any difference in the integration of
new employees into your Office/Region since implementing the mentoring
program? ____ If yes, what differences have you noted?

12. Did your Office/Region utilize the Best Practices? ____ Please explain.

**Voluntary Survey Questionnaire
For the General Counsel's Mentoring Program**

Thank you for your participation in the General Counsel's Mentoring Program. To assist the General Counsel in assessing the program, you are invited to complete this survey as to your experience as a mentee in the program. Your completion of this survey is voluntary. You need not identify your name, title, grade or Office/Region unless you choose to do so. Your responses will be kept confidential. Please return the completed survey no later than 30 days after your program ends to Deputy Assistant General Counsel Yvette Hatfield, Division of Operations-Management, by inter-office mail, e-mail, or fax on 202-273-4274. Thank you for your cooperation.

Office/Region _____

Name _____

1. If you were a mentee:

a. How soon after you entered into your new office/position was a mentor provided?

b. How long did you participate in the program? _____

c. How were your requests, if any, for change in mentor assignment answered?

d. Were you satisfied/not satisfied with the program?

e. What changes would you recommend?

f. What feedback, if any, did you provide to management?

3. One of the purposes of this survey is to better understand the experiences of employees when they enter a new Agency work setting. We would also like to know if there are things that the Agency could do better to address the needs of certain populations. To assist us in this effort, we would like to know how you as a mentee identify yourself in terms of various descriptive characteristics. Some examples of descriptive characteristics are:

- Are you a Professional or Support Staff member?

- How would you describe your race (including bi-racial/multi-racial)?

- How would you identify your national origin?

- What is your ethnicity?

- What is your gender?

- Are you an experienced worker?

- Are you alter-abled?

- Do you need a workplace accommodation?

- Are there other characteristics that you use to describe yourself?

You may answer all of these questions, some of them, or none at all. Answering these questions is strictly voluntary. Please be assured that if you do provide information, it will be used only to assist the Agency in improving its efforts to recruit and retain a diverse workforce. The information will not be disclosed for any other purpose. As stated in the introduction, you may respond anonymously to this survey.
