

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

MEMORANDUM GC 09-05

February 20, 2009

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

**FROM:** Ronald Meisburg, General Counsel

**SUBJECT:** Revisions to the General Counsel Mentoring Program's  
Policy Guidelines and Best Practices Guide

On March 9, 2006, Memorandum GC 06-03 launched the Non-Supervisory Employees' Mentoring Program for all General Counsel Divisions and Offices. Your recent experiences with the program were captured in your responses to the Mentoring Program Surveys issued on September 17, 2008, under Memorandum OM 08-75.

The Management Diversity Committee has reviewed your suggestions and identified revisions to the policies and best practices for the program. Those ideas are incorporated in the attached amended Policy Guidelines and Best Practices Guide.

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation with this important initiative.

/s/  
R.M.

Attachments

cc: NLRBU

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## 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 present an opportunity for our offices to ensure that the staff members receive the support that they need to enter, or transition into, new positions. Mentoring programs also provide an excellent opportunity for offices to identify those employees who are most effective at developing independence in mentees and in assisting them to become acculturated to the office and to the Agency. **The mentoring program, is *not* a substitute for any orientation and training programs provided in the office. The mentoring program is a socially interactive supplement to the training programs provided in the office.**

Guidelines for the nationwide mentoring program are provided below. Flexibility, within those guidelines, is permitted so that mentoring programs appropriate for each office are retained or developed. Offices seeking to develop, improve, or augment mentoring programs should use the report from the Mentoring Committee and the Best Practices Guide as resources. In addition, the *Guidelines and Tips for Mentors and Mentees* pamphlet is being provided as a resource.

### Policy Guidelines

1. Mentors will be provided to all nonsupervisory employees who are new to the Agency and, where appropriate, for employees who are new to their offices or new to their positions. Mentors are to be assigned to Bridge Program participants also, with the preference being to find mentors who are graduates of the Bridge Program. Since the Compliance Officer is the only person in an office to hold the position, a nationwide mentoring program has been established pairing a senior Compliance Officer in one office with a mentee in another to help, not with office acculturation, but to serve as a resource and sounding board for the mentee. It is also recommended, but left to the discretion of the Regional Director, that transferees be assigned mentors to assist in acclimating to the office culture, in socializing with the staff, and in becoming familiar with internal office procedures. Mentors for coops and interns are not mandatory because of their short period of employment with the Agency.
2. Initially, the office Mentoring Program managers are to meet with the mentors and mentees to explain the program's objective. At such meetings, managers should distinguish the mentoring program from other training programs and from supervisory duties. The office Mentoring Program managers are to distribute copies of the Policy Guidelines, *Best Practices Guide*, and the *Guidelines and Tips for Mentors and Mentees* pamphlet to both the mentor and mentee at the beginning of the mentoring relationship.

3. The mentors should be trained to assist the mentees in becoming familiar with office practices. Mentors serve as resources to assist the mentees to understand their new responsibilities and the office culture. Mentors assist mentees to assimilate into the office, and serve as a technical resource to provide general advice or suggestions. Mentors should not serve in a supervisory capacity for their mentee(s) nor provide feedback about performance.
4. Mentors should possess these qualities: excellent interpersonal skills, communication skills, technical expertise, good work habits, and knowledge of office policies and procedures. The assignment of a mentor should in no way interfere with management assigning other employees to help train the new employee on particular assignments. Supervisors should not be selected as mentors; therefore, a backup mentor should be considered in situations where the mentor is temporarily assigned to a supervisory position for an extended period of time.
5. Each office is to select a local Mentoring Program manager(s) who is responsible for the design and implementation of programs in individual offices. The Mentoring Program manager decides in what manner mentors are assigned and makes mentoring assignments consistent with these policy guidelines.
6. Supervisors remain the primary source of instruction, guidance, and appraisal for employees. Any performance issues are to be addressed by the supervisor and not by the mentor.
7. The mentees should have access to a mentor for as long as the program provides, with an initial six month minimum.
8. An annual evaluation of the office program will be conducted by management and adjustments made to the program, as appropriate. Oversight of the program is management's responsibility.
9. Annually, each office will provide a status report on its mentoring program to the Division Heads identifying the managers responsible for the program and describing the best practices as well as pitfalls observed in its program. In turn, each Division Head shall complete a report for the Associate General Counsel in the Division of Operations-Management. Annually, the Division Heads' reports will be compiled into a final report for the General Counsel. In evaluating the overall success of the Mentoring Program, feedback on the program from mentors and mentees will be considered.
10. A Best Practices Report on the Agency's mentoring programs will be made available to all Agency offices. It will be updated periodically.

## Best Practices Guide

The following are some suggestions and best practices gleaned from responses to surveys regarding the General Counsel's Nonsupervisory Mentoring Programs. These Best Practices will be modified and expanded as experience is gained.

1. When employees are new to an office, the office should try to ensure that they are provided with a welcoming environment and are exposed 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 the Agency's mission and new employees to office personnel and policies.
2. A good mentoring program provides a new employee with an opportunity to speak openly with an experienced coworker concerning his/her office experience on a regular basis. At the same time, the mentor gains valuable experience. Mentors should **not** report concerns about a mentee's performance to supervisors; rather, they should encourage the mentees to speak with their supervisors about their performance. Feedback about performance should be handled only by supervisors.
3. When selecting mentors, it is important to focus on the prospective mentor's skills, knowledge, experience, willingness to serve, and positive personality traits. For some mentees, a single mentor might work better whereas with other mentees rotating mentors might be preferable.
4. During the first 6 months, each mentor/mentee pair should meet together at least weekly for the purpose of discussing office practice and procedure, general case assignments and tasks, analyzing case-related experiences in the previous week and/or recommendations for future practice. After the initial 6-month period, the pair may meet less frequently and at the initiation of either party. For example, the mentor may periodically talk with the mentee to ascertain whether any undisclosed issues need airing. Likewise, the mentee may seek advice from the mentor whenever questions arise about a work assignment, office policy or procedure. Nothing described in this paragraph will affect management's ability to change mentor/mentee pairings at any time during the assignment period.
5. Those offices that create and develop expectations for their mentoring programs are most successful in fully integrating new employees into the office "culture" and orienting new employees to the office, as well as to Agency policies. The expectations stated by offices with successful mentoring programs are 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 and skills;

- e. Enable mentees to develop own strengths; and
- f. Enhance employee career development.

6. 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. In these assignments, the mentoring lasts for the duration of a particular job task, e.g., processing of R cases or reviewing the investigation files of an unfair labor practice charge. In such assignments, the new employee is assigned an experienced mentor who possesses excellent skills in a particular area.

7. Minorities and women should be encouraged to serve as mentors but should be selected based on the same criteria as nonminority mentors. Diversity should be only one consideration in the pairing of mentors and mentees.

8. The success of the pairing is enhanced if the Mentoring Program manager(s), holds an initial meeting with the mentors and mentees to introduce them to the program. The program manager(s) ensures a more rewarding program if copies of the Policy, Guidelines, *Best Practices Guide*, and *Guidelines and Tips for Mentors and Mentees* pamphlet are provided to and discussed with the participants at that time. Thereafter, periodic meetings with mentors and mentees enable the manager(s) to assess the effectiveness of the program and make any changes, as appropriate.

9. Managers should be sensitive to the need for positive interaction between the mentor and mentee and should consider reassignment when appropriate.

10. Office management should provide information to new employees about training available through the Office of Employee Development (OED), as well as Agency-wide training.

11. At the conclusion of each fiscal year, Mentoring Program managers and mentors will be surveyed for feedback concerning their experiences in the program. A completed survey must be returned to the Mentoring Committee in accord with the cover memorandum distributing the survey. In addition to a completed Mentoring Committee survey, the office Mentoring Program manager(s) also must complete the annual report due to the Division Heads.

12. Mentees will be surveyed on a voluntary basis concerning their experiences in the program at the end of each fiscal year that they participate in the program. Written surveys will solicit demographic information regarding each participant's gender, race and/or ethnic identity, age range and disability status. The surveys will clearly state that individual responses are voluntary and will be treated confidentially. To ensure that demographic identifiers cannot be associated with any particular survey response, all completed voluntary surveys should be faxed to the Agency's Office of Equal Employment Opportunity at (202) 273-4473.