

OFFICE OF THE GENERAL COUNSEL

MEMORANDUM GC 03-03

July 16, 2003

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

FROM: Arthur F. Rosenfeld, General Counsel

SUBJECT: Mentoring Pilot Program and Best Practices Guide

I am committed to developing and promoting in the Office of the General Counsel in all of its components a workforce that reflects the diversity of our Nation. One important way to further this goal is to engage in broad-based recruiting for the very best candidates for vacancies in our professional and support ranks. If our efforts at broad-based recruiting are sufficiently energetic, our applicant pools and our new employee selections will be of high caliber and diverse.

It is also critical that our new hires, including our minority hires, be introduced to the work of the Agency and to our culture of excellence. In this regard, I convened the Management Diversity Committee to develop a pilot-mentoring program for all new employees,¹ resulting in the production of the attached Mentoring Pilot Program and Best Practices Guide. The committee has my gratitude for a job well done.

The Heads of all General Counsel Field and Headquarters offices should institute the Pilot Mentoring Program immediately. At the end of a year, the program will be evaluated. It is through your efforts that the Office of the General Counsel of the National Labor Relations Board continues to be a model employer in the Federal Government and continues to excel in the performance of its

¹ Facilitated by Helen E. Marsh, Regional Director, Region 3, the committee is comprised of Glenda F. Johnson, Chief, Labor and Employee Relations Section; Harry E. Jones, Assistant General Counsel, Labor and Employee Relations; Yvette C. Hatfield, Deputy Assistant General Counsel, Division of Operations-Management; Catherine (Kitty) McCoy, Director, Human Resources; Dorothy L. Moore-Duncan, Regional Director, Region 4; Robert J. Poindexter, Director, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity; Steven Shuster, Assistant to the Regional Director, Region 5; Deborah M.P. Yaffe, Assistant Director, Office of Appeals; and Lori Suto-Goldsby, Deputy Director, Office of Equal Employment Opportunity, served as the resource administrator. In addition, the committee sought and received valuable input from Field and Headquarters staff at all levels.

mission. You have my greatest admiration for efforts you make to that end and for your laudable successes.

/s/
A. F. R.

Attachments

cc: NLRBU
Release to the Public

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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 non-supervisory 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.

Guidelines for the nationwide mentoring program are provided below. In light of the feedback that we received from the managers and supervisors as well as the information provided in the Mentoring Survey and Report, 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 develop, improve, or augment mentoring programs may use the report from the Mentoring Committee and the Best Practices Guide as resources.

Policy Guidelines

1. Our surveys revealed that a large number of offices provided mentoring for professionals but very few provided mentoring to the support staff. Mentors will be provided to all non-supervisory employees who are new to the Agency, and where appropriate, for employees who are new to their offices or new to their positions.
2. 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.
3. Mentors should possess these qualities: 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 programs in individual offices and will decide in what manner mentors are assigned, consistent with these policy guidelines. They will make mentoring assignments.
5. Supervisors remain the primary source of instruction, guidance, and appraisal for employees.
6. The mentoring programs should supplement the orientation and training programs provided in the offices.
7. The mentees should have access to a mentor for as long as the Regional Office 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.
9. Annually, a status report on each office's mentoring program will be provided to the Division Head identifying the managers responsible for the program and describing the best practices as well as pitfalls observed in its program.
10. A Best Practices Report on the Agency's mentoring programs will be made available to all Agency offices. It will be updated periodically.

APPENDIX A

Best Practices Guide

The following are some suggestions and best practices gleaned from the surveys submitted regarding existing GC-side mentoring programs. We will be providing updated information and additional best practices as they become available.

1. When employees are new to an office, the office should try to ensure that they all are afforded the same comfort level within the office 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 Agency work and new employees to office personnel and policies.
2. A good mentoring program provides new employees an opportunity to speak openly with an experienced coworker concerning his/her casework on a daily basis. At the same time, the mentor gains valuable experience.
3. When selecting mentors, it is important to focus on the prospective mentors' skills, knowledge, experience, willingness to serve, and positive personality traits.
4. Those offices that create and develop expectations for their mentoring program 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.
5. Depending on the seniority and size of the staff, as well as the needs of the office, certain temporary additional task-specific training assignments can be made. In these assignments, the training 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 to a more experienced employee with excellent skills in a particular area.

6. Minorities and women 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. Factors to evaluate the office program's success may include feedback on the program from mentors and mentees.
8. Managers should be sensitive to the need for positive interaction between the mentor and mentee and should consider reassignment when appropriate.

