

**Alameda County Bar Association**

# **Judicial Mentoring Project Handbook**



**2018**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ACBA is a dynamic, multi-faceted organization with more than 1,400 members. The ACBA administers the Volunteer Legal Services Corporation, the Criminal Court Appointed Attorney Program, and Lawyer Referral Service, in addition to sponsoring programs and networking events. The ACBA also maintains twelve sections including a Barristers section, committees, and is governed by a Board of Directors.

The mission of the ACBA is to promote professional development, ethics and civility in the practice of law; ***to promote diversity in the legal community***; to promote civil rights and the fair and equitable administration of justice; to improve access to legal services to residents of Alameda County; and to promote communication and cooperation among the Bench, the Bar and the legal community.

Many people have contributed to the success of the Judicial Mentoring Project and we acknowledge and thank them: the stellar 2007 Co-Chairs of the ACBA's East Bay Diversity Bar Coalition (EBDBC), Honorable Trina Thompson of the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda, and Christine Noma of Wendel, Rosen, Black & Dean LLP, for their sound leadership; the EBDBC's Judicial Mentoring Project subcommittee members, Christine Noma, Judge Stuart Hing, Cheryl Hicks, and Nedra Shawler for their careful review of all of the materials for this project; the San Diego County Bar Association for their generosity in allowing us to use their 2006 Mentor Program Handbook for the basis of parts of this handbook; Patricia D. Lee, Director, and Theresa Mesa, Program Developer, of the State Bar of California's Office of Legal Services, Access & Fairness Programs, for their consultations during the development stages of the Judicial Mentoring Project; the Honorable Brenda Harbin-Forte of the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda, for her leadership on the State Bar Council on Access and Fairness; Rosylen Mangohig for providing generous staff assistance on this project in addition to her duties as the ACBA Court Appointed Staff Attorney; and ACBA Executive Director Ann Wassam for management and oversight of the Judicial Mentoring Project.

We also acknowledge and thank: the 2008-2009 Co-Chairs of the EBDBC, Honorable Delbert Gee of the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda, and Nedra Shawler, Office of County Counsel—Alameda, who provided steadfast guidance for this project and for other EBDBC endeavors; the 2010-2012 Co-Chairs of the EBDBC, Honorable Stuart Hing of the Superior Court of California, County of Alameda, and Erlinda Castro, solo practitioner and former ACBA board member, who are committed to the success of the project and continuing the work of the EBDBC; and the 2013-2017 EBDBC Co-Chairs, Judge Tara Flanagan and Toni Mims-Cochran.

In 2008, the Judicial Mentoring Project was selected for the American Bar Association’s Partnership Award which salutes outstanding bar association projects that seek to increase the participation and advancement of lawyers of color in the organized bar and to attract students of color to the legal profession. Without the participation of the following bar associations over the years, this project’s success would not have been possible:

- Asian American Bar Association
- Bay Area Lawyers for Individual Freedom
- California Association of Black Lawyers
- Charles Houston Bar Association
- East Bay La Raza Lawyers Association
- Iranian American Bar Association—Northern California Chapter
- National Native American Bar Association
- South Asian Bar Association of Northern California
- Women Lawyers of Alameda County

In 2018, the ACBA disbanded the East Bay Diversity Bar Coalition in an effort to not duplicate efforts by the Minority Bar Coalition. The ACBA will continue the Judicial Mentoring Project to serve our community and to strive to promote diversity in the profession.

And a very special **THANK YOU** to all of the mentees who participated in the project (whose participation remains confidential) and to the judges and commissioners who volunteered to be mentors or speakers for this project.

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## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>I. GENERAL OVERVIEW .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>II. GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>III. GUIDELINES FOR MENTEES .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>IV. DISCUSSION TOPICS/ACTIVITIES FOR MENTORS .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>V. DISCUSSION TOPICS/ACTIVITIES FOR MENTEES.....</b>	<b>11</b>

## **I. GENERAL OVERVIEW**

### MISSION STATEMENT

The Alameda County Bar Association's mission is:

- To promote professional development, ethics, and civility in the practice of law
- To promote diversity in the legal community
- To promote civil rights and the fair and equitable administration of justice
- To improve access to legal services for residents of Alameda County and
- To promote communication and cooperation among the bench, the bar and the community

This project was established to provide attorneys contemplating a career on the bench with a structured method of obtaining guidance about how to reach that goal. Experienced judges will be able to provide valuable feedback and assistance

to potential judicial candidates to help them hone the necessary skills for a judicial career.

The Judicial Mentoring Project's goals are to:

- Bridge the gap from the bar to the bench
- Demystify the process of becoming a judge
- Facilitate traditionally underrepresented attorneys in seeking advancement to the bench
- Increase the diversity of the judicial applicant pool, and
- Promote diversity on the bench to reflect our community

## **QUALIFICATIONS**

Mentors must be judges—active or retired—who have agreed to mentor no more than two attorneys per year.

All mentees must:

- Be a current ACBA member
- Be a current member of a local identity bar association
- Have at least 10 years of legal experience
- Plan to apply for judgeship within 12 months of participating in this program
- Have a demonstrated commitment to our community evidenced by their civic activities and interests outside of the legal profession
- Be committed to public service (pro bono activities, pro tem experience)

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **Q. How do I become a mentor or mentee?**

**A.** Complete the respective application form. Mentor and mentee applications are available online at [www.acbanet.org](http://www.acbanet.org).

### **Q. Are there special requirements for mentors?**

**A.** Mentors will be selected based upon the combination of their commitment to increasing the diversity of the bench and their desire to voluntarily serve, as well as their willingness to devote to meet with each assigned mentee, a minimum of two hours per year per mentee.

### **Q. Are there any special requirements for mentees?**

**A.** Each mentee must meet all of the following qualifications: be a member of the ACBA; be a member of at least one other local identity bar associations; have at least 10 years of legal experience; plan to apply for judgeship within 12 months of participating in this project; have a demonstrated commitment to our community through civic activities/interests outside of the legal profession; and be committed to public service.

### **Q. How are mentees paired with mentors?**

**A.** Mentors will be paired with mentees by a small, confidential subcommittee of the ACBA upon evaluation of the mentor and mentee applications submitted. Pairing considerations will include the mentor's areas of previous legal practice and current department assignment. Each mentor will have no more than two mentees.

### **Q. What is the time commitment of the mentor/mentee relationship?**

**A.** Mentors are required to meet with their mentees, at a minimum, for two hours per year per Mentee. The mentor and mentee may choose to meet more often based on their personal preferences. The ACBA encourages the mentor and mentee to meet at least twice a year.

### **Q. Will there be support for mentors?**

**A.** Members of the ACBA subcommittee will provide assistance and information to mentors.

## **BENEFITS**

Mentoring is a mutual relationship between individuals and benefits both mentors and mentees.

Mentees receive benefits such as:

- Encouragement, support and affirmation of their decision to seek a position on the bench
- The opportunity to explore new ideas and alternatives in attaining that goal
- Contacts with new individuals and groups that can aid her/him in their career goals
- Information about the informal relationship or politics within the professional community
- Stimulus to challenge them to achieve their goals

Mentors receive benefits such as:

- The satisfaction of helping someone grow and succeed
- An exchange of information and knowledge, which can reaffirm a mentor's own standards and philosophy
- Seeing the results of his or her own knowledge, expertise, and influence

The community benefits by having a diverse bench reflective of the population it serves and worthy of the trust and confidence of the public.

## II. GUIDELINES FOR MENTORS

### BASIC MENTORING CONCEPTS

**Teaching:** The mentor must share with the mentee the specific skills and knowledge necessary for successful job performance on the bench. The method of instruction can be formal or informal, direct or subtle.

**Guiding:** The mentor must orient the mentee in the "unwritten rules" and traditions of the judicial profession.

**Advising:** Teaching and guiding are mentoring behaviors usually initiated by the mentor while advising often occurs in response to a request by the mentee.

**Counseling:** The mentor should listen to the mentee's concerns and communicate an empathic understanding of those concerns about pursuing a career on the bench. In addition, the mentor helps the mentee develop plans of action to achieve the mentee's goals.

**Role Modeling:** The mentor serves as a person whom the mentee can emulate. Role modeling usually occurs subtly as an outcome of the relationship rather than by conscious design by either mentor or mentee. The mentor's traits and behaviors become a blueprint that the mentee unconsciously uses to pattern his or her own manner.

**Validating:** The mentor must evaluate, possibly modify, and finally endorse the mentee's goals and aspirations. Validating involves helping mentees believe in their goals.

**Motivating:** The mentor must provide the encouragement and impetus for the mentee to act toward achievement of their goals. Whether done through a "kick in the pants" or a "pat on the back," the end result is action.

**Communicating:** The mentor must establish open lines of communication through which concerns can be discussed clearly and effectively. Expertise means little if it cannot be communicated.

1. **Preparation:** Read the mentor section of this handbook.
2. **Commitment:** Mentoring requires a certain time commitment, and the mentor should be prepared for that. At a minimum, the mentor should meet with each mentee for at least two hours per year.
3. **Introduction:** Once a 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.



4. **Specifics:** Establishing guidelines in the beginning will be helpful to both the busy mentor and to the busy mentee. Let your mentee know the best time to reach you. To ensure follow up, have a note in your calendar to contact your mentee.
5. **Discussion:** Mentors should assist the mentee with general issues related to applying for a position on the bench or to running for election to the bench. Pay particular attention to ethics and professionalism questions, the value of reputations, and situational advice about how to be successful.
6. **Experiences:** Share your experiences; “war stories” are often the most effective illustration or teaching tool.
7. **Keep it Professional:** The role of the mentor is a professional one. Encourage open communication with your mentee, but remember that a mentor is a counselor, not necessarily a best friend.
8. **Keep it Confidential:** Discussions between mentors and mentees must remain confidential. This will ensure that mentees feel comfortable candidly discussing various aspects of and issues related to applying for judgeship.

### III. GUIDELINES FOR MENTEES

1. **Preparation:** Read the mentee section of this handbook.
2. **Consideration:** Be mindful of your mentor's schedule. Do not schedule a mentoring meeting and fail to show up on time. If your mentor has to cancel a session or is a bit difficult to reach from time to time, do not be offended, but realize how demanding it can be for busy judges to mentor busy attorneys. Express gratitude for your mentor's involvement and energies on your behalf.
3. **Introduction:** It is the mentee's responsibility to contact the mentor. You should initiate the first call. Introduce yourself, find out when it is best to contact your mentor, and set up your first meeting. Tell your assistant your mentor's name and ensure that he or she knows of your commitment to the mentor and will treat your mentor as a "VIP."
4. **Specifics:** Establishing guidelines in the beginning will be helpful to both the busy mentor and to the busy mentee (e.g., scheduling meeting times by phone only, email to be used for "quick" questions, in person meetings during lunch time or after 6 pm). If you are easier to reach at certain times, let your mentor know. To ensure follow up, have a note in your calendar to contact your mentor.
5. **Discussion:** Mentees should initiate discussions regarding general issues related to applying for a position on the bench or to running for election to the bench. Pay particular attention to ethics and professionalism questions, the value of reputations, and situational advice about how to be successful. Keep a file to drop in questions as they come up (e.g., things you overhear at a seminar or the courthouse, problems you resolved but about which you would like a reality check or clarifying theory vs. practice). Do not quarrel with the advice your Mentor provides. Listen well, reach across your differences to accept the guidance you sought and needed.
6. **Keep it Professional:** Remember that you have a professional relationship with your mentor. A mentor is a counselor, not necessarily a best friend.
7. **Keep it Confidential:** Discussions between mentors and mentees must remain confidential. This will ensure that mentors feel comfortable candidly discussing various aspects of and issues related to applying for judgeship.

#### **IV. DISCUSSION TOPICS/ACTIVITIES FOR MENTORS**

- Attend local civic group activities and functions so the mentee is introduced to individuals outside of the legal community
- Discuss “informal” local rules (e.g., what to know about judges, court staff)
- Attend local and state bar association functions
- Attend CLE events together
- Take the mentee out for lunch or for coffee after work
- Provide assistance and/or contact information if mentee wishes to join local civic or charitable organizations as a member or board member
- Tell a career story—share the highs and the lows of your career path
- Help the mentee write short range and long range career development plans
- Talk about what you do every day:
  - General description of your job
  - Major tasks, subtasks, specific responsibilities
  - How your job fits into the total organization
  - How you spend a typical day
  - Personal qualities needed for this type of work
  - General opportunities for advancement
  - Effects of economics on your specific job and on your occupation in general
  - Other jobs you could do with your skills
  - How you got started in your job
  - Other jobs you have held, skills you developed from them, their relationship to your present job
  - Skills you had to learn specifically for this job and how you acquired them
  - Your recommendations to others for acquiring these skills and suggestions you would give someone applying for your job
  - What you like most and least about your job
  - What you would change if you could
  - Interpersonal skills you find most important in your work and why
  - Attitudes and values that are important to you and how they are reflected in your work
  - Obstacles or barriers you had to overcome to get where you are now

## **V. DISCUSSION TOPICS/ACTIVITIES FOR MENTEES**

- Identify personal goals for the mentoring relationship and discuss them with your mentor
- Share successes with your mentor (e.g., a case you recently won, a strategy that worked well)
- Do some thinking and planning about current career direction and goals. Identify how the mentor can help you meet these goals, and ask specifically for the help
- Interview the mentor about his or her career path (e.g., barriers to overcome, pitfalls along the way, failures as well as successes)
- Be clear about what you want from your mentor at any given time (e.g., do you want advice right now, a sympathetic ear to listen, help with problem solving). Do not be afraid to ask for the specific type of support you want in different situations.
- Discuss the issue of integrating personal and family life with career objectives and concerns, such as:
  - Family time
  - Leisure time
  - General health/diet/exercise
  - Stress factors: tension, fatigue, burn-out
  - Stimulation factors: excitement, challenge, opportunity
  - Where your present activities fit into your life: lifetime career or stepping stone to something else