LGBTQ+ Law Section

LGBTQ+ Mentoring Program Manual

Mission Statement

The LGBTQ+ Mentoring Program is a joint initiative of the New York State Bar Association's LGBTQ+ Law Section and the LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York (LGBT Bar NY). Through the Program, the Sponsoring Organizations seek to foster the professional development of LGBTQ+ law students, judicial law clerks, and early-career attorneys, and to help them navigate the unique issues they may encounter in law school and the early years of their legal careers. The Program aims to strengthen a sense of community across the memberships of both organizations while enhancing the skills and career prospects of participants.

About the Sponsoring Organizations

The **New York State Bar Association's LGBTQ+ Law Section** seeks to promote equality in the law for LGBTQ+ people; combat the tide of anti-LGBTQ+, especially transphobic, laws and regulations; eliminate discrimination against LGBTQ+ attorneys and litigants; support equality of opportunity for, and increase the visibility of, contributions made by LGBTQ+ attorneys; and promote diversity within the judiciary by inclusion of all underrepresented groups, including LGBTQ+ people.

The **LGBT Bar Association of Greater New York (LGBT Bar NY)** is a bar association of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) legal community in the New York metropolitan area, dedicated to promoting the expertise and advancement of LGBTQ+ legal professionals while serving the larger community. The LGBT Bar NY Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, oversees related charitable and educational activities by and for its membership and the public. As part of its mission, LGBT Bar NY is dedicated to serving LGBTQ+ law students and recently admitted attorneys.

Program Overview

The Program matches experienced attorneys and jurists from a variety of practice areas and backgrounds with LGBTQ+ law students, judicial law clerks, and early-career attorneys to promote their academic, professional, and personal advancement.

Who can apply

- **Mentees:** LGBTQ+ law students, judicial law clerks, and attorneys in the early years of practice.
- **Mentors:** Attorneys and jurists willing to share their experience, support the next generation of LGBTQ+ lawyers, and engage consistently throughout the program year. Mentors need not identify as LGBTQ+; allies are welcome.
- **Membership:** All mentors and mentees must be members of the NYSBA LGBTQ+ Law Section, LGBT Bar NY, or both. Law students may join LGBT Bar NY at no cost.

How matching works

Applicants complete a single online application as either a mentor or a mentee. A joint committee of the Sponsoring Organizations makes matches based on practice interests, career stage, location, goals, and any preferences an applicant chooses to share. Each mentee is matched with one mentor; a mentor may be matched with more than one mentee if they are willing.

Please read the roles and responsibilities below and the Standards of Conduct & Agreement at the end of this manual before applying.

Program Year and Timeline

The 2027 program year runs from January 2027 through October 2027.

1. **Applications open:** November 1, 2026.
2. **Application deadline:** January 8, 2027.
3. **Matches announced:** Late January 2027, by email to each mentor and mentee.
4. **First meeting:** Pairs should meet within 3 weeks of being matched.
5. **Ongoing meetings:** Pairs should connect at least once a quarter, in person, by video, or by phone.
6. **Mid-year check-in survey:** June 2027.
7. **Final evaluation survey:** October 2027.

Participants are encouraged to attend programming of both organizations throughout the year, including LGBTQ+ Law Section and LGBT Bar NY events, a virtual mentorship program networking workshop, and the annual in-person mentoring reception.

Mentee Information

Mentee Roles

The Program will provide a mentor for support and to assist in achieving academic, professional, and personal goals. Mentees should expect to play one or more of the following roles:

1. **Team Player**
    - Identify and share your needs and concerns with your mentor.
    - Be receptive to feedback.
2. **Planner**
    - Set realistic goals with your mentor.
    - Contribute to solving problems.
3. **Communicator**
    - Communicate clearly and effectively.
    - Don't be afraid to ask questions!
    - Listen and be respectful.

Mentee Responsibilities

1. **Respect**
    - Respect your mentor's time as if it were your own.
    - Respond to your mentor's emails or calls promptly.
    - Keep scheduled appointments with your mentor (see Attendance Policy below).
    - Keep confidential what your mentor shares with you (see Standards of Conduct).
2. **Communicate**
    - Communicate your needs and limits early.
    - Discuss your preferred method of communication, the best days to be reached, and your time constraints.
3. **Professionalism**
    - Maintain a professional relationship at all times.
    - Abide by the Standards of Conduct & Agreement at the end of this manual.
4. **Self-Evaluate**
    - Be committed to self-development and growth.
5. **Feedback**
    - Thank your mentor when they've helped you solve a problem or reach a goal.
    - Complete the mid-year and final program surveys.

Mentee Expectations

The Sponsoring Organizations expect all mentees to be professional and committed to the Program. Manage your schedule carefully and notify your mentor right away of any change that affects a meeting or other expectations you have set together.

Attendance Policy: Mentees may not cancel or reschedule a previously scheduled appointment with their mentor more than two times in one program year. A mentee who does so may be removed from the Program.

Ending or Changing a Match: If at any time you feel you cannot work with your mentor, or no longer wish to participate, contact the Program as soon as possible (see Program Contacts). We will help resolve the issue or reassign you if necessary.

Mentor Information

Mentor Roles

A mentor acts as a professional resource and helps the mentee reach the goals they have communicated. Your role will depend on your mentee's needs; sometimes you will play one role, sometimes several.

1. **A Guide**
    - Help your mentee navigate the transition into law school, a clerkship, or practice.
    - Share how law firms, in-house legal departments, public interest organizations, government agencies, and courts actually work.
    - Share tips for developing and maintaining a professional demeanor and reputation.
    - Everybody makes mistakes. Share yours!
2. **A Motivator**
    - Encourage your mentee to identify and take concrete steps toward their goals.
    - Notice what your mentee is doing well and tell them.
3. **A Coach**
    - Encourage positive behavior with positive feedback.
    - Address problems with constructive feedback.
4. **An Advisor**
    - Set goals that are reachable, specific, clear, and time-bound.
    - Keep goals flexible and adjust them when needed.
    - Point your mentee to career resources they may need.
5. **A Role Model**
    - Model high standards of professionalism and a positive attitude. Mentees often learn by example.

Mentor Responsibilities

1. **Respect**
    - Keep confidential what your mentee shares with you (see Standards of Conduct).
    - Respect your mentee's time as if it were your own.
2. **Communicate**
    - Discuss early on your preferred method of communication, the best days and times to reach you, and your time constraints.

    - Set boundaries from the beginning.
    - Invite your mentee to raise any concerns.
    - Recognize your mentee when they reach a milestone.
3. **Professionalism**
    - Use care in deciding whether to encourage a friendship.
    - Work through conflict with care and respect, and contact the Program promptly if a problem arises.
    - Abide by the Standards of Conduct & Agreement at the end of this manual.
4. **Feedback**
    - Complete the mid-year and final program surveys.

Mentor Expectations

The Sponsoring Organizations expect all mentors to be committed to the Program, keep scheduled meetings, and respond to their mentee promptly. If you must cancel, give as much notice as you can and offer a new time. We understand conflicts may arise. If at any time you feel you cannot work with your mentee, or no longer wish to participate, contact the Program as soon as possible (see Program Contacts). We will help resolve the issue or reassign your mentee if necessary.

Suggested Activities

Not sure where to begin? A few ideas:

- Meet for coffee, lunch, or dinner.
- Attend your mentee's moot court argument, or invite them to observe a court appearance.
- Review your mentee's resume or a writing sample and give feedback.
- Help them practice interviewing.
- Bring them to a bar association event and introduce them around.
- Talk through bar leadership, including how to get involved in the LGBTQ+ Law Section and LGBT Bar NY.

Standards of Conduct & Agreement

All mentors and mentees agree to the following as a condition of participating in the Program.

1. **Professionalism.** The mentoring relationship is a professional one. Participants will treat each other with courtesy and respect.
2. **Identity and confidentiality.** Participants will never disclose another participant's sexual orientation, gender identity, or the extent to which they are out, to anyone, without that person's express consent. Personal matters, opinions, and career plans shared within the relationship stay confidential unless the person who shared them agrees otherwise.
3. **No harassment or discrimination.** Harassment, discrimination, and retaliation of any kind are prohibited, including on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, or age.

4. **Appropriate boundaries.** Romantic or sexual relationships between a mentor and mentee during the program year are not permitted. Participants will not use the relationship for personal financial gain or to solicit business.
5. **No obligation of employment.** Mentors are not expected to provide jobs, internships, or referrals, and mentees should not request them as a condition of the relationship.
6. **No attorney-client relationship.** Mentors provide career guidance, not legal advice. Participation does not create an attorney-client relationship.
7. **Judicial participants.** Judges and court staff who participate will do so consistent with their applicable ethical rules. Mentees should not discuss pending matters before a mentor's court.
8. **Raising concerns.** Participants will promptly report any concern about conduct in the Program to the Program contacts. Concerns will be handled as discreetly as possible.
9. **Removal.** The Sponsoring Organizations may end a match or remove a participant who does not follow these Standards or the Program's policies.
10. **Surveys.** Participants will complete the mid-year and final program surveys.

Agreement: By submitting an application, I confirm that I have read this manual and agree to abide by these Standards of Conduct and the Program's policies.

Program Contacts

For questions, concerns, or changes to a match, contact either Sponsoring Organization:

Organization	Contact	Email
LGBT Bar NY	Program inbox	info@lgbtbarny.org
NYSBA LGBTQ+ Law Section	Mercedes Peno, Section Liaison	mpeno@nysba.org

NOTE: These materials were adapted, with permission, from the Practicing Lawyers for Law Students (PALS) mentoring guidelines in a prior edition of this manual.

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