

## Professional Staff Inclusiveness Action Items

Inclusiveness is about everyone in the organization and everyone must participate in order to make the workplace more inclusive. Building and/or strengthening work relationships is the key element in creating an inclusive workplace. There are many ways professional staff members can actively participate in building a culture of inclusion:

### *Recruiting and New Hires:*

- Increase the pool of diverse candidates:
  - Hiring coordinators should examine their own potential unconscious bias (take the Harvard Implicit Bias test to assess possible areas of bias) so they know where their blind spots are and can consciously try to reduce their impact.
  - Use diverse networks as a resource for recruiting.
  - Employees can support the hiring coordinator's efforts for more diversity by sharing information on their own diverse networks and potential candidates.
- Develop a standard protocol to welcome all new employees and integrate them into the organization by helping them develop relationships with co-workers:
  - Ask everyone to stop by the new hire's office to meet him/her at some point during the first week.
  - Institute a lunch celebration or reception for every new hire on their first day.
  - Provide a welcome letter to everyone in the organization to introduce new hires.
  - New employee information/orientation materials should include information about affinity groups.

### *Casework and Clients:*

- Sponsor a brown bag lunch so attorneys can update staff members on the status of cases. Staff members are sometimes not included in "big picture" discussions that can help them understand important overarching aspects of cases.
- Organize a luncheon or meeting with a client so that staff can interact with them directly and learn about developments in the client's business.

- Participate in cross-area meetings within the organization to find out how teams can help each other with respect to diversity and inclusiveness as well as casework (e.g. IT department meeting with Human Resources: what can we do to help you?).

## *Communication:*

- Develop a communication tool (e.g., intranet, email or newsletter) where news, including special recognition, new developments, and “common ground” information such as birthdays, new babies, and outside accomplishments can be shared.
- Create an intranet “sticky note” or newsletter article that spotlights someone in the office. Feature a new person on a daily or weekly basis and include facts about them on different topics (things others might not know about the person). You can survey everyone once a year to create a database of information that is ready to plug in on the spotlight feature.
- Learn the names of coworkers and pronounce them correctly (if you don’t know how to pronounce someone’s name, call them at a time when you’re sure it will go to voicemail so you can hear the person say his/her name). Put employee pictures on the intranet to help people learn each other’s names.
- When there’s a win to celebrate, all team members including attorneys and staff should be recognized and appropriately credited. Communicate news of success in the organization’s newsletter or at group/department meetings.
- Make it a part of your daily routine to go say “hi” to someone you don’t normally talk to, like the managing partner. If everyone is encouraged to go to a different person’s office every day just to greet them, this will become part of the organization’s culture and help lead to deeper work relationships in the office.
- Introduce “up and down” communication throughout the organization. Encourage management to give the organization a sense of transparency by holding firm-wide town hall meetings and discussing major decisions.
- Instill respect with ethical communication. Work out problems directly with coworkers to address the issue of gossip and morale head-on.
  - Be empathetic and put yourself in the other person’s shoes when communicating.
  - Recognize and understand the generational differences that impact communication.
  - Acknowledge the value of nuance; it might not be a big deal to you, but it might be to the other person.
  - Remember that everyone is not “just like me.”
  - Validate a person’s experiences and skills such as work experience, travel, and language.
- Institute an open door policy. All employees should be able to talk to anyone at any time to discourage “rankism” which usually starts with a rigid hierarchy of attorneys and staff.

- Ensure the organization's website and marketing materials reflect diversity of employees – but do not over-represent or "tokenize."
- Check the appropriateness of terms if you are unsure.
- Challenge negative assumptions and interrupt bias; when you hear something intolerant, address it immediately.

### ***Learning and Development:***

- Diversity and inclusiveness training, as well as the organization's goals, should be transparent and open to all. Create buy-in to the mission statement. When the entire team is engaged, building an inclusive organization becomes everyone's responsibility.
- Make opportunities to learn about diversity and inclusiveness readily available and easily accessible. Put information on the intranet so employees can utilize the tools when it's convenient for them.
- Offer continuing education opportunities for staff so they feel they are a valued part of the team. Provide equal access to educational resources to both staff and attorneys.
- Set up a mentoring system between staff members. Develop a mentoring relationship with someone of a different gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.

### ***Social Activities:***

- Host social activities (i.e. pot lucks, brown bag lunches, happy hours, Friday breakfasts) to provide opportunities for everyone to build relationships which are the foundation of inclusiveness. Provide a mechanism that incentivizes attendance.
- Notice who isn't attending events and invite them to attend with you. Alternatively, create a buddy system for events where people are designated to "bring each other" to events.
- Invite someone to lunch that you don't know well.
- Designate certain people in the office to be "sparkers"; they are responsible for breaking up different groups at events and ensuring that everyone intermingles (attorneys and staff often gravitate to those in their own groups).
- Plan morale-boosting events such as family events and summer parties. Use inclusive terms in invitations such as "guest" or "partner" rather than "spouse."
- Organize activities such as intramural sports or books clubs to provide more social opportunities.
- Use volunteering as a way to mix staff with attorneys. Plan a food drive and create a competition across teams.