

MEMORANDUM
TO EXPLAIN AND ASSIST IN THE CREATION OF
A CBA SECTION DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION PLAN

CBA Mission Statement

The mission of The Connecticut Bar Association (the “CBA”) is to promote the public interest through the advancement of justice and the protection of liberty. The CBA achieves its mission, in part, by working to eliminate bias and enhance diversity and inclusion.

The CBA adopted a Diversity Policy on October 5, 2015, as set forth below:

The Connecticut Bar Association is committed to diversity in its membership, officers, staff, House of Delegates, Board of Governors, executive committee, sections and committees, and their respective leaders. Diversity is an inclusive concept encompassing gender, gender identity, race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, age, and disability.

We are a richer and more effective association because of diversity, as it increases our association’s strengths, capabilities, and adaptability. Through increased diversity, our organization can more effectively address member and societal needs with the varied perspectives, experiences, knowledge, information, and understanding inherent in a diverse relationship.

In creating and implementing a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Section Plan, a Section affirms its commitment to this mission.

Introduction and Purpose of CBA Section Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan

This memorandum explains the purpose of a Section DEI Plan and is intended to assist Sections in the creation and implementation of such a Plan.

The CBA Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Committee offers this Memorandum as guidance for those CBA Sections interested in furthering diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts within their sections. None of these recommendations are mandatory. As each section may be at different stages of DEI efforts, it is suggested that at the beginning of each bar year the EC of each Section conduct a self-assessment to determine what goal(s) the Section should seek to achieve in furtherance of DEI efforts.

In sum, it is suggested that each Section Plan:

- 1) Designate a Section Diversity Liaison/Coordinator to help facilitate the Plan.
- 2) Create one or more goals for the Section to achieve by the end of the bar year with designated action steps the Section will utilize to achieve those goals.
- 3) Be created by the Section Executive Committee as a whole and as part of a collaborative process.

Each of these suggestions are explained further below.

It is also suggested that each Section conduct a self-assessment by May 1st of each calendar year to determine if the designated goal(s) were met and to share this report with the CBA Director of Diversity. The purpose of this is also discussed further below.

Creation and Implementation of a Written Section Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan

Part One: Designation of Section Diversity Liaison/Coordinator

In furtherance of the CBA's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, it is suggested each Section designates each year a Diversity Liaison/Coordinator to serve as a member of the Section's Executive Committee.

It is recommended the Diversity Liaison/Coordinator:

- 1) oversee the implementation of the Section's DEI Plan
- 2) act as a liaison to the CBA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
- 3) report to the Section Chair and the Section's Executive Committee periodically
- 4) prepare the Section's annual written self-assessment report and share it with the CBA Director of Diversity by May 1st

Part Two: Designation of Goals and Action Steps to Further DEI Efforts within Section

It is suggested each Section create and implement a diversity, equity and inclusion plan which sets forth one or more goals the Section seeks to achieve in each bar year and designates actions steps the Section will utilize to achieve those goals.

A few broad goals which a Section can consider in furthering its DEI efforts are:

- 1) Increase Inclusivity. There are many specific ways in which a Section may seek to increase inclusivity, such as:
 - a. Increase and Maintain Diversity in Section Membership
 - b. Increase and Maintain Diversity in Section Leadership
 - c. Provide Speaking and Publishing Opportunities to All Members
 - d. Increase Diverse Offerings of Section Activities and Diversify Location of Section Meetings
 - e. Develop a Pipeline
 - f. Consider Accessibility of Technology.
- 2) Raise awareness and continue to educate members of DEI issues; and
- 3) Maintain outreach aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

To assist the Sections in achieving selected goals, potential action steps have been provided for each goal. It is recommended that each Section first select one or more goals, then designate one or more action items the Section will utilize in achieving said goal(s). A template for a Section DEI Plan is attached.

Suggested Goals and Potential Action Steps for Each Goal:

Inclusiveness

-Increase and Maintain Diversity in Section Membership

Potential Action Steps:

- Hold optional periodic roundtable lunches/breakfasts or happy hours in varying geographic regions for Section members to attend and discuss new cases or issues affecting the members and allow different members to plan each one.
- Review Section membership list and make affirmative efforts to encourage diverse non-members to join the Section, and to encourage inactive, diverse members to become more active and engaged.
- Establish Section mentor/mentee program.
- Create opportunities for diverse Section members to lead new or existing initiatives or organize CLE or other Section events.
- Form affinity groups within the section.
- Each executive committee member can invite one member who does not usually attend section meetings to attend (a different member for each meeting), introducing, welcoming, inviting, and including the member in section activities. Follow-up with that member during the month for further engagement.
- At each section meeting, Diversity Liaison/Coordinator can discuss the Section's efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- Designate one Section member to welcome new members at Section meetings and invite non-members that attend meetings to become members.

-Increase and Maintain Diversity in Section Leadership

Potential Action Steps:

- Invite, encourage and include diverse nominations for Section officer positions.
 - This may include directly reaching out to diverse candidates.
- Ensure that the Section Executive Committee and other Section committees are well balanced in diverse categories.
- Allow sufficient time for potential candidates to apply and campaign for open Executive Committee positions.
- Create opportunities for leadership development for diverse Section members.

-Provide Speaking and Publishing Opportunities to All Members

Potential Action Steps:

- Invite and involve members of all levels in Section committees, to take on speaking roles at Section meetings including moderator and speaker introduction roles at Section meetings.
- Ensure that opportunities to present at CLEs are shared broadly within the section.
- Invite members to attend one annual diversity-based seminar and provide a summary report to the Section on same.
- Invite and include newer and less involved members to organize programs and have public roles such as introducing meeting speakers.

-Increase Diverse Offerings of Section Activities and Diversify Location of Section Meetings

Potential Action Steps:

- Hold Section meetings in various counties, and at various locations so long as the venue is confirmed to be ADA Compliant (coordinate through CBA).
- Form a diverse Section programming committee that evaluates the proposed programming critically to ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion in the composition of panels, and the roles held by panelists (e.g., diverse individuals should be represented among the substantive topic presenters).
- Section meeting speakers should be diverse from one another and from meeting to meeting.
- Section meetings and social gatherings should vary and consider the comfort and interests of all members.
- Offer virtual meetings as an alternative means of participation

-Develop a Pipeline

Potential Action Steps:

- Sponsor law school programs/seminars funded by the Section; consider hosting such events at law school campuses to encourage law student participation
- Make Section events open to law students for free or reduced cost.
- Section to fund academic scholarships for diverse candidates.
- Strengthen the flow of information between the Section and YLS through a YLS liaison.
- Provide Section membership materials to the law schools to solicit law school students' interest.
- Consider creating pipeline programs, to encourage young individuals of diverse backgrounds to consider a career in the law, and to introduce them to the substantive work of Section members.
- Provide mentorship opportunities between current law students and section members.
- Consider participating in pipeline programs operated by other sections of the bar.

-Accessibility in Use of Technology

Potential Action Steps:

- Using technology within platforms for events including:
 - Recording of events with closed captions.
 - Offering virtual options (e.g., Zoom, Microsoft Teams) for participants to attend Section events.
 - Allow for anonymous comments or participation from attendees

Raise Awareness by Engaging in Educational Opportunities Related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Potential Action Steps:

- Bring a member of the CBA DEI Committee to educate the Section on DEI issues.
- Reach out to the CBA Director of Diversity to learn about CBA DEI resources.
- Promote other CBA offerings related to DEI to the Section.
- Section Diversity Liaison to coordinate communication between the Section and DEI Committee, regarding relevant events and initiatives.
- Collaborate with DEI Committee on the development and production of CLEs, Seminars and events.
- Invite a speaker to Section meetings to present on topics related to diversity, equity and inclusion

- Invite affinity bar leaders to Section meetings.

Develop and Maintain Outreach Aimed at Promoting Diversity

Potential Action Steps:

- Advertise affinity bar association events to the Section.
- Section to sponsor diversity, equity, and inclusion focused events.
- Ensure that the Section's diversity plan is visible on the CBA website under your Section's group page.
- Co-sponsor Section events with affinity bar associations (coordinate with CBA staff in advance).
- Advertise the Section's programs and membership to the affinity bar associations.[1]
- Amend Section bylaws to include a commitment to diversity.
- Financially sponsoring DEI initiatives.
 - Reach out to the CBA Diversity Director for sponsorship opportunities.

Part Three: Finalizing Section Plan

It is recommended the Section Chair shall consult and collaborate with the Section Executive Committee members in the creation of the Section DEI Plan. The intention is for this to be an interactive and iterative process, with a series of drafts contemplated with modifications from time to time. The Section may share the draft or finalized plan with the CBA Diversity Coordinator to seek input, suggestions and/or assistance. The final Section DEI Plan should be shared with all members of the Section.

Written End of Bar Year Self-Assessment

It is recommended that the Section create a written end of the bar year assessment as to the progress or achievement of the Plan goals and that such written assessment be shared with the CBA Director of Diversity by May 1st. The purpose of the assessment is to help guide the Section to determine if goals were achieved and to reflect on what worked and what may not have worked. This assessment should be communicated to the incoming Section leaders to continue DEI efforts within the Section and to assist next bar year Section leaders in creating the following year's Section DEI Plan. The purpose of sharing this report with the CBA Director of Diversity shall be to help guide the CBA's diversity, equity and inclusion efforts and provide support to Sections to achieve the Section's plan and goals.

A Section DEI Plan Template is attached for reference purposes.