

LAO second chair program to allow in-firm mentorships for equity-seeking mentees and mentor matching

Mentees should identify as Indigenous, Black, racialized, living with a disability, women or LGBTQ+

Legal Aid Ontario (LAO) is committed to the professional development of private bar lawyers who take on legal aid work.

Our [second chair mentorship program](#) permits new and mid-career lawyers to learn from the knowledge and experience of senior lawyers on interesting and complex cases. Serving as ‘second chair’ on a case, new or mid-career lawyers get hands-on training on legal aid cases.

Previously, mentees could not work at the same firm as their mentors. Now, a pilot expansion of the program will permit in-firm mentorship of lawyers from equity-seeking groups. Additionally, LAO will endeavour to match mentees with mentors based on identification, location and area of law, if requested.

This pilot is in line with [LAO’s racialized community strategy](#) and the Law Society of Ontario’s and Criminal Lawyers Association’s report on the retention of women and equity-seeking communities in law and mentorship. Panel lawyers who are not members of these groups remain eligible for mentorship by mentors outside their firm and are encouraged to apply under existing program rules.

To be eligible for in-firm mentorship under this pilot, firms must have five or fewer lawyers. On a case-by-case basis, we will consider applicants from small firms with more than five lawyers.

Mentees eligible for in-firm mentorship and mentor matching should be counsel who identify as:

- Indigenous, Black or racialized
- living with a disability
- women or
- LGBTQ+, including non-binary, two-spirit, or transgender

Applicants identifying with more than one—or intersecting—groups will receive priority in the case of limited funding.

Other considerations include:

- location
- nature of cases, and their potential impact on LAO’s core client groups
- whether cases provide a good learning opportunity

- ability for senior lawyers to provide strong mentorship in a designated area of law
- junior lawyers' commitment to serve vulnerable clients, and to current and future legal aid work, in particular
- previous mentorship through this program

More information

[Second chair mentorship options](#)

[Mentor and mentee eligibility](#)

[Mentor application form for an individual case](#)

[Mentee application form for an individual case](#)

[Mentor application for up to 50 pre-approved hours](#)

Or, email questions to secondchair@lao.on.ca.