

Model Policy: Nondiscrimination and diversity

Why you need this policy:

The diversity of the 21st century work force has made offering equality of opportunity to individuals regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristics not related to their professional abilities is not just a legal mandate but an economic imperative.

How this policy helps you:

The key to ensuring diversity and avoiding discrimination in all forms—direct and indirect, deliberate and intentional—is to establish a written diversity policy like the Model Policy below.

How to use this policy:

The very idea of a generic, one-size-fits-all diversity policy flies in the face of diversity principles. To do justice to diversity, each law firm must craft its own unique policy, one that doesn't simply express support for the concept of diversity but sets out the specific things the law firm actually does to promote diversity both in the office and community. However, a Model Policy like the one below, which comes from a number of different actual examples, can help you organize your own policy and ensure it includes all of the important information needed to be effective.

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Model Policy: Nondiscrimination and diversity

ABC Law Firm

1. Statement of policy

The founding partners of ABC Law Firm were committed to establishing a law firm known not just for the excellence of its service but for providing a diverse and open work environment open to people of all backgrounds. This commitment to ensure that all of the people who work for us are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential, regardless of their race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristics unrelated to their professional abilities has endured throughout our history and remains a basic tenet of ABC Law Firm to this day.

2. Purpose of policy

This Policy is intended not simply as an expression of ABC Law Firm's fundamental and abiding commitment to diversity but as a description of the things we do to make those principles a reality that is reflected in all aspects of our practice.

3. The diversity principles we live by

ABC Law Firm's diversity policy is based on the commitment to ensure that all of our employees and representatives must:

- Treat everyone with whom we interact with dignity, respect, professionalism, and fairness;
- Encourage talented individuals with different personalities, points of view, skills and approaches to work together to deliver top quality legal services in a work environment of mutual support;
- Promote equal opportunity in all areas of employment at every level of the firm;
- Ban and not tolerate discrimination against or harassment of members of the firm, job applicants and those with whom the firm engages on the basis of their race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristics unrelated to their professional abilities; and
- Constantly work to better understand better the needs of our diverse client base, employees and the communities in which we live and work.

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4. Making diversity a reality

To put these principles and put our commitment to diversity into action, ABC Law Firm has a diversity leadership committee comprised of firm-wide partners, other professionals, and well as office-specific diversity committees. The ABC Law diversity leadership committee oversees the firm's diversity initiatives in all the geographic regions in which we work.

a. Recruitment and hiring: ABC Law Firm recruits, nurtures, develops, and advances the most talented law students, graduates, lawyers and support personnel based solely on their merits and abilities and without engaging in any form of discrimination, directly or indirectly, including via ensuring that:

- i. All job applicants receive as much clear accurate information in advertisements, job descriptions, and interviews as necessary to enable them to gauge their suitability for the position;
- ii. Recruitment literature does not imply in any way preference for positions based on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristics unrelated to their professional abilities;
- iii. Job application forms are as clear as possible, not phrased in too narrow or restrictive terms, and free of personal questions such as about marital status and number and ages of children;
- iv. All applicants and prospective volunteers are informed of and given a copy of the ABC Law Firm diversity policy; and
- v. Attorneys and staff members who conduct recruitment interviews are trained to take an unbiased approach regardless of the applicants on race, ethnicity, religion, national origin, gender, age, sexual orientation, disability, or other personal characteristics unrelated to their professional abilities, and to ask only non-discriminatory questions which relate to the job.

b. Diversity agenda: The ABC Law firm diversity leadership committee engages all members of ABC Law Firm with the diversity agenda and seeks to integrate diversity and inclusiveness into all firm activities.

c. Firm policies: The ABC Law firm diversity leadership committee is also charged with ensuring that our workplace policies and processes are inclusive and designed to promote a high-performance culture that values individual contribution, teamwork, innovation and productivity.

d. Monitoring and review: To ensure that ABC Law Firm's commitment to diversity remains dynamic and part of everyday practice, the diversity leadership committee continuously and proactively monitors the effectiveness of this diversity policy and the firm's initiatives and identifies things we can do to improve them.

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