

BRONX DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE STRATEGIC UPDATE FOR SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2024

Executive Summary:

In the final quarter of 2024, the DEI, team focused on two critical pillars of its strategic plan- transformative engagement and professional development training focused on cultural competency and training that supports compliance with EEOC priorities.

September

Team Capacity, Training, Transformative Engagement

Capacity was added to the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion team with two new hires for a Deputy Chief and DEI Coordinator. With the addition of recruitment responsibilities and a focus on governance documents guiding the work and engagement of employee resource groups, as well training, the new hires were critical.

Cultural competency programing and educational outreach for Hispanic Heritage Month took place. On the issue of trans-inclusive engagement, conversations were initiated among trial team to survey their experiences and management of cases involving trans or non-binary complaining witnesses (Victims) and what the witness intake session were like.

DEI also worked with the Crime Victims Assistance Bureau in connecting them with a facilitator for their operational retreat focused on professional development, cultural competency and professional self care.

In addition, DEI participated in the orientation sessions for new assistant district attorneys in both a general engagement session and an Intro to DEI training session, which set forth key concepts and terms from DEI and the applicability of DEI principles to trial advocacy checkpoints like witness intake and voir dire (selection of a jury.)

October

Training

Transformative Engagement

In honor of Disability Employee Awareness Month, the DEI team put together an in-depth presentation in partnership with Disability Rights New York, which presented the content and led the discussion. The specific focus was on accessibility in public spaces under Title III of the American with Disabilities Act.

On the transformative engagement front, two ERGs planned and executed mission-driven activities. Insieme, the Italian American ERG partnered with the Italian American Cancer Research Foundation to sponsor a bus that provided mammogram screening and guidance for over 25 people. Unidos, the Hispanic American group led a cultural education event highlighting the Latin American Diaspora with connections to the Bronx.

The DEI team completed its draft of a new culturally competent witness notification, but will commit to launching the new form in 2025 when more agency-wide due diligence can be conducted re: the form.

DEI completed its two-part orientation session with new ADAs, which incorporated new section on gender-expansive DEI principles. The updated content included an overview of current human rights protections in New York City and New York State, and case law examples relevant to gender expression and inclusiveness.

DEI also updated recruitment outreach and participated in law school recruitment trips to key promising pipelines with diverse student populations. The Unidos ERG participated in a number of recruitment events for Latino/Latinx students. For the second year in a row, the Veterans ERG participated in the annual Veterans Legal Career Fair in Washington, DC.

In addition, a cultural calendar was created to create a helpful planning tool for ERGs and to promote broader allyship and joint cultural programming opportunities among the ERGs.

November

Transformative Engagement

The DEI team highlighted its transformative engagement pillar with a dynamic Open House event that featured speakers from the New York City Lenape Center. The focal point centered on the indigenous history of the Bronx, specifically the history of the Lenape Tribe, which was part of the Delaware Nation, a First Nation sovereignty along the waterways of the Delaware River and nearby tributaries.

The DEI also sponsored a program for Veterans Day and Military Families that featured two guest speakers from the Veterans Affairs offices for Fordham University and Hostos Community College. They focused on the unique experiences and workforce transition challenges of members of the veterans community.

In follow-up to our commitment to the hiring of veterans, a referral from Hostos' Veterans Affairs Office resulted in an interview and offer for the candidate.

The DEI team also created a series of strategic goals related to training with focus on gender and trans-inclusive training for experienced and new BXDA team members for roll-out in the 2025. Conversations began in earnest in identifying a resource for this purpose.

December:

The ERG network met with DA Clark to discuss insights and to provide updates on their work for the year. They also used the session to highlight the connection between ERG engagement and retention at BXDA.

The DEI connected with the Litigation Training team to map out a prospective schedule for training and education programs in 2025. ERG governance documents have also been developed re: creating a stronger framework re: executing their programs to advance inclusion and cultural competency.

The DEI team continues to work on an intranet webpage for archiving programs and as a repository for DEI information that can be shared among the ERGs to promote allyship and connection.

