

## **SECOND CHAIR TRAINING PROGRAM**

### **Strengthening the Federal Defense Bar**

In 2006, the Federal Defender and the District of Minnesota bench joined together to develop what was to become a nationally known Second Chair (Mentor) Program. The goal was two-fold: 1) to provide a structured training program for attorneys new to federal criminal practice that would ensure the continued high quality of representation provided by the CJA panel and 2) to include attorneys in that program that were a reflection of the legal community and the community we serve. It was with these goals of further developing a well-trained and diverse panel that we entered in to this venture.

In 2007, six attorneys were chosen to be in the first class. The second class, selected in 2011, included ten attorneys and the third class had eleven. The backgrounds of the mentees are varied, ranging from solo practitioners practicing primarily criminal defense in state court to attorneys at large firms with significant experience in pre-indictment federal litigation. The cases assigned to the mentees are also varied, ranging in complexity and subject matter.

#### **Monthly class meetings:**

The mentee class meets once a month for a CLE-type training that is designed and provided for them exclusively. These trainings address substantive federal criminal law, skills development and practical points for effective defense of clients. Additionally, mentees learn about the important federal agencies involved in the criminal justice system. Trainers include CJA panel members, attorneys from the Federal Defender's Office and representatives from various federal agencies, including the U.S. Probation Office, the U.S. Attorney's Office and the U.S. Clerk's Office.

#### **Case Work:**

Experiential learning is an important part of the Second Chair Training Program. Mentees are assigned to work on cases with senior lawyers from the Federal Defender's Office and the CJA Panel. The senior (mentor) attorneys guide mentees through all phases of a federal criminal case. Mentees are prepared for and get to participate in a meaningful way in the cases. Ranging from client interviews through witness examinations and, as necessary, sentencing allocutions, the casework component provides mentees with important courtroom/case experience.

In the most recent mentee class, every mentee worked on at least three (3) cases. Ten of the mentees were involved in cases that went to trial and all members of the class participated in significant evidentiary hearings.

Mentees are compensated at the rate of \$70/per hour for their work on appointed cases. No compensation is provided for participating in the monthly training programs.

**Benefits to the Mentees:**

In addition to the training provided, mentees also have the opportunity to build important networks that strengthen their practice. Class members build relationships with each other and, through their exposure to members of the federal criminal defense bar, the federal bench and other federal court participants, broaden their base of resources, contacts and knowledge. Courtroom experience and strengthening client skills are also benefits mentees gain. Additionally, due to the significant amount of writing involved in federal cases, the program provides opportunities to work with a mentor to improve legal writing skills.

**Expectations of Mentees:**

The attorneys chosen to participate in the program are expected to attend the monthly training sessions, to participate in the regular seminars presented by the Federal Defenders Office, to meet regularly with the Program Coordinator and to work on three assigned cases over a two+ year period.

**Former Mentee Attorneys Include:**

Shannon Elkins  
Paul Edlund  
Eric Hawkins  
Kristine Boylan  
Wolanda Shelton

Patrick Cotter  
Ryan Garry  
Kimberly Hall  
Dan Le  
Stephen Smith  
Douglas Micko  
Catherine Turner  
Kevin Magnuson  
Ryan Pacyga

Kristin Kanski  
A.L. Brown  
Marcus Almon  
Chris Zipko  
Gretchen Gurstelle  
Theresa Bevilacqua  
Beth Forsythe  
Lauren Campoli  
John Conard  
Charlie Clippert  
Lousene Hoppe

**Application Process**

A call for applicants will be sent later this fall via email. Applicants will be asked to submit a formal application, writing sample and references. After applications are reviewed, a select number of candidates will be chosen for interviews.

If you have additional questions, please contact the Program Coordinator Caroline Durham at (612) 272-9111 or [caroline@carolinedurhamlawyer.com](mailto:caroline@carolinedurhamlawyer.com).